POLYHEDRON

137

VOLUME 15
NUMBER 94
MONTH 07/99

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letters to the editor

FINALLY, SOMEONE WROTE US SOME LETTERS!

Dear Editor,

I read Dean Waltenburger's letter in Poly 134 with some interest. While I agree that Kevin Melka's article may have come over as somewhat negative (unless you know Kevin), Dean is missing something fundamental to the campaign game versus the pregen style of gaming. Playing in the campaign games does not encourage you to broaden your experience as a roleplayer. Dean says he can be creative and generate the type of character he would like to play and try varied styles of roleplaying. I have to say that's a big "YES" to the generation part, and a huge "NO!" to the varied styles. Campaign games encourage players to create characters in a mold with which the player is comfortable. By allowing players to take characters from scenario to scenario, and to advance in abilities by so doing, it discourages having more than one (or maybe two) characters, and there's nothing to stop them being clones of each other. Most people do better (and their character advances faster) if they play the same (favorite) type of character all the time. What I see in some campaign tables (and indeed in home campaigns) is that players simply play themselves, albeit with magical powers or massive weapons.

Classic (or pregen) events, on the other hand, provide far more of a challenge - especially in the multi-round events where you must play a different character in each round as you advance. In these games, a player can often be forced outside the "comfort zone" and have to use and develop their roleplaying skills, instead of just being themselves. HQ recognized this when the player points were split into Classic and Campaign groups.

I don't wish to seem critical of Dean here, nor am I advocating getting rid of campaign games - I have characters in three of them and am coordinator of one of them. It is, however, important to recognize that the Network is very different than it was when I joined it some ten years ago (a little after Kevin Melka), and that not all of the changes have been for the better. Campaign gaming, as played by some members, is one of those things which is not very pretty. It is this which needs to be addressed as we look to the future of the Network, and the hobby as a whole.

Yours,
Wes Nicholson, Virtual Seattle Campaign Coordinator
wes@dynamite.com.au

Dear POLYHEDRON® Magazine:

No letters! This is hard to believe. Many members must have thought as I did and believed we wouldn't ever see it in the magazine. I hope many do as I am and take this chance to write in and voice their views. I am a new member of the RPGA® Network, but have been playing the AD&D® game almost 19 years now. I like what I see in the magazine so far, but would like to suggest some changes.

The index does not need to be printed on every page. The first couple would suffice just fine. This would create more space for articles, or the space could be shifted to form a larger magazine from the binding. This would give those of us who three-hole-punch the magazine more room to put it in a binder. I have several different binder-folders that I like to put sections in by topic. I'm sure I'm not alone in such a practice.

I am surprised you are short on reader response surveys returned. Who wouldn't want to give input on our magazine? Not to mention a shot at a free AD&D book. Come on people! You won't see what you like if you don't respond, and it's only a stamp (33 cents)! So send it in you lazy bums, today!

I would like to suggest a module spotlight for new or re-released adventures. Enjoyability, toughness, and suggested techniques for running it or possible improvements.

That's good for now. More of my "rantings" next month. Keep up the good work, guys!

Eric Schippers
Jarratt, VA

Thanks for the input Eric. I agree with your sentiments about people returning response forms, for exactly the reason you state. We put the form in so we can change the magazine if the members (that's you, reader) want something different. And the forms can be faxed.

Howdy all –

Robert Wiese's column "Notes from HQ" mentions an "ivory tower" and a narrow funnel. Robert, there is some really good stuff going on. You almost need to add one more Director, the Internet Region. Someone to contact when a mere Regional person wouldn't cover online events. An RPGA@tsrinc.com type NetRep you may already have in the form of TSROs.

I flipped to page 6, "Member Spotlight," and became very excited to see someone I knew. Steve Jay's last question deserves another read by both Robert and POLYHEDRON's Sean Glenn. Where is DRAGON DICE® represented in RPGA's own Polyhedron Magazine? WoTC, I'd love to see some visibility in DUELIST®, but that's doubtful. Sean Reynolds, and David Eckelberry before him, took this unique Collectible Dice Game inspired by Lester Smith under their wings at TSR and they allowed us, the players, to make it grow beyond the first race die molds which were cast. Steve Jay's follow-up article with Dave could cover the whole DRAGON DICE community and events. ... RPGA is suppose to keep ranking of our DRAGON DICE tournaments, but I couldn't tell you were I would find those stats. It does come up on the DRAGON DICE Mailing list. Is there an online ranking webpage - if not, Why?

Andrew Hart
Taven@aol.com

RPGA is an organization devoted to roleplaying games. DRAGON DICE, though fun (and produced by TSR) is not a roleplaying game, and we have always had trouble trying to implement a ranking system. Good news for you DRAGON DICE players out there—the DCI can support your rankings, and talks have begun to make this happen. We feel that DCI is the right home of DRAGON DICE rankings, since they work like trading card game rankings.

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notes from HQ

ADVENTURING FOR THE FUTURE

ADVENTURING FOR THE FUTURE

During the past two years the RPGA® NETWORK has been struggling with issues related to the supply of tournament to shows: what constitutes a convention vs. a game day, preventing private game days, a hard-to-enforce policy allowing only clubs to run monthly events, and game days requested just to get copies if LIVING CITY™ event certs to copy extra sets of (yes, this happens). Since this column is about letting you into my head regarding Network matters, I want you to see what course I think we should follow in regards to supplying adventures.

The RPGA currently provides adventures to conventions and game days in a tournament format, that is with a structured play time, winners, and prizes. This system places the focus on individual achievement when we should be encouraging group enjoyment and social activity. I would like us to get away from the "tournament" mentality entirely as the basis for providing adventures. What I envision is the RPGA providing adventures which can be used for home game groups, club meetings, game days, and conventions.

I would like to introduce the idea of private gatherings and public gatherings where Network adventures are played. Home games and club meetings would be private events, game days would be small public events, and conventions would be, well, conventions. Private gatherings would not appear on the convention calendar, but would appear in a list of where a particular event has played. Adventures would be available to paying RPGA members only to run at any of these types of gatherings, allowing for the maximum flexibility in use of sanctioned events.

Adventure playing should emphasize group fun and cooperation, and should not have the environment of a competitive tournament. This means that there will be no winners or prizes for adventure playing as the basis for adventure participation. Competitive tournament options are covered below under convention support. To facilitate this, the RPGA scoring system would be re-designed to emphasize the group aspect of play, and to allow for ratings of each player's ability rather than voting for the top four. The judge would continue to be rated the same way.

To encourage reporting of scoring, we would design (and will do so anyway) a web-based scoring entry page that makes it far easier for organizers to report event results (and the downloadable programs would still be available). Further, we would include a PDF version of the scoring packet in the informational file mailed with adventures; organizers could then print the few packets they needed. Because of these changes, we would be able to eliminate the tournament fee of $10 per round. We would allow an option for sending scoring packets from HQ to an organizer running at least 10 tables, and there would be a nominal fee per packet for doing so.

To help get results reported, we would allow a given organizer to advance order a reasonable but small number of "shows" at one time. Organizers who had an outstanding convention, that is one which had taken place but for which the results were not posted, would not be able to place a new order until the outstanding show is posted.

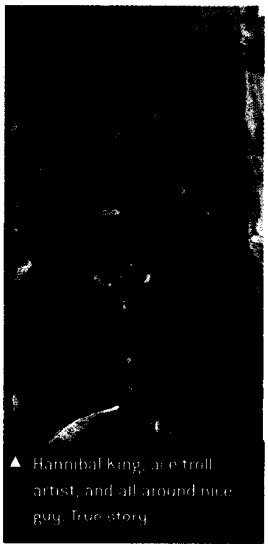
The final piece of this vision is the one which has taken the longest to crystallize, the convention support program. A convention for this purpose will be defined as an event which has run 25 or more tables of RPGA events at one location over one weekend in the past, and is at least two full days long, or shows promise (in our opinion) of doing so at the planned show. Exceptions may be made, and would be worked out with HQ. Conventions are important as larger gatherings of members, and we would like to encourage Network members to attend one or two every so often. For shows which qualified as conventions, we might make the following cool extras available:

- Conventions would have access to adventures not available at all to smaller gatherings.
- Conventions would have access to premiere versions of LIVING™ campaign events, which would have better treasure, different and more interesting encounters, or perhaps an extra encounter which had special campaign significance. Smaller gatherings could run the regular versions of LIVING campaign events, which would have greatly reduced treasure.
- Conventions would be able to run adventures as competitive tournaments, with winners and prizes. The scoring packet would be the same, but the database would process the points differently based on how the event is listed for the convention (whether competitive or not), so that in competitive events the individual's performance would have greater weight, and placements would be calculated.
- Conventions would have access to prize packs, special prizes provided by RPGA for awarding at convention RPGA tables. These prize packs would have a fee assessed with them.
- RPGA points processing into the database would automatically include a multiplier for those conventions which had at least 25 tables of results in the file, so that players and judges would get more points at the convention than for playing the same events in a small private or public gathering.

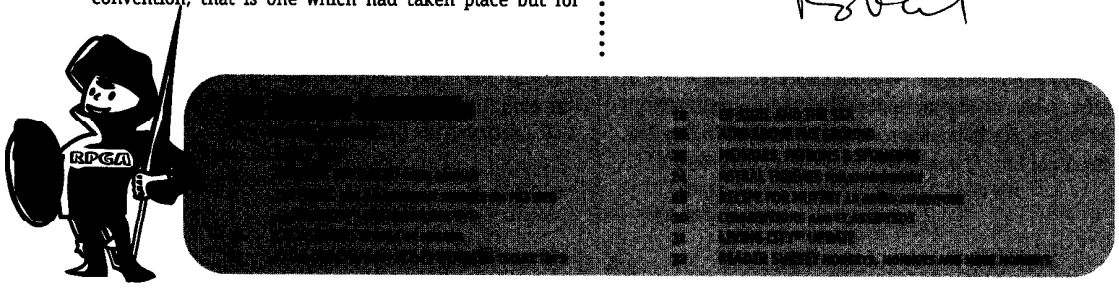
So there it is, my vision for what we can do in terms of adventure provision in the future. Helpful comments are welcome. The email address and street address are on the front of the magazine cover. This is not set in stone, and changes can be made (or the whole idea abandoned). Also, this is not a new policy in force. The current policy as found on www.rpga.com under Tournaments and Conventions is still in force. Any version of this idea could not be implemented until we made some changes to the ordering system to track these new options, which means the earliest you might see something like this is early 2000.

Until next time,

Robert



▲ Hannibal King, ace troll artist, and all around nice guy. True story.



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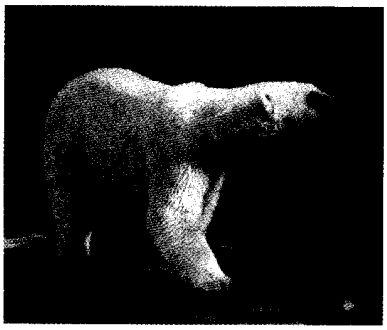
CONTEST

Eric Schippers writes, "A contest I would like to suggest is for the best castle, fortress, keep, or hide-out. Give full fortifications, troops, and equipment, and its place in the community." This sounds great, so put on your thinking cap. Create and describe the best fortress, castle, or hideout you can. Include all the details you think necessary for someone to use it in their home campaigns or adventure writing. Maps are required with the submissions, but you don't have to go overboard on neatness. Make them clearly readable; we'll have the winning entries redrawn by our cartographers anyway. Submissions are due by September 30th, and must include an electronic file which can be read by MS Word, a standard disclosure form, and a printout of the maps. Maximum length of text is 1,500 words, so the whole fits into three pages in the magazine. Good luck!

MASCOTS

The RPGA sponsors a polar bear named Zero at the Milwaukee County Zoo, and has done so since 1994. Zero has been living well on our money, and we have been happy to have pictures of him at HQ. At the WINTER FANTASY™ show we raised over $2,000 to support Zero in the future, and by adding money I had raised in 1997 (but not yet paid) we have renewed our commitment to support Zero through June 2001.



ZERO THE POLAR BEAR

Last year, we adopted some new friends at the zoo as well. We had been sponsoring some rockhopper penguins, but changed to a pair of ruffed lemurs named Kirby and Darby last year. Well, Kirby and Darby have moved on to another zoo, and so we had to select a new friend. Therefore, I'd like to introduce Nicky, a golden lion tamarin. Nicky, as you can sort of see by his picture, is about 10-12 inches long with golden-red hair. Golden lion tamarins live in swampy primal forests with lots of vines, and Nicky lives in an environment very like that but much smaller. Nicky is an omnivore, so if he comes to your game table you can feed him whatever you happen to have there in the way of food. Golden lion tamarins are among the most endangered species in the world, with only 550 living in the wild and another 500 in zoos. Deforestation has devastated their natural habitat, and zoo and pet collection has reduced the number in the wild. We are happy to be helping such an endangered species to continue. For more information on the Golden Lion Conservation Project, check out http://www.wwf.org.br/wwfeng/wwfpr12.htm or http://www.si.edu/natzoo/zooview/research/glt2025/glt2025.htm. For information on the Milwaukee County Zoo, check out http://www.execpc.com/Milwaukee_Zoo/.

NICKY THE TAMARIN

CLUB DECATHLON UPDATE

Since last issue we have gotten several events judged. Here are the results so far, and the competition is only halfway done as this is written. There is plenty of time to jump in and compete.

TOURNAMENT PLAY

Results reported by convention, places show where the participant came in on the packet.

GENGHIS CON

PM Players - 4 pts (1st place)
Waterdeep Boys Club - 2 pts (1st place)

ORCCON

WARLords - 2 pts (2nd place)
GLARPGAC - 2 pts (2nd place)

WINTER FANTASY™ SHOW

DAWN - 5 pts (team, 1st place)
Black Spot - 5 pts (team, 1st place)
PM Players - 4 pts (1st place)
Black Hand Gaming Society - 2 pts (1st place)
The Mob - 1 pt (participating)
*Note: since the team results from round two (telling who won) never arrived in HQ, we gave both clubs 1st place points. We won't do this again.

SUNQUEST/MEGACON

DAWN - 4 pts (1st place)
The Mob - 2 pts (2nd place)

ONE-ROUND TOURNAMENT WRITING EVENT

1st place (5 pts): Bride of the Gods by Kevin Melka (PM Players)
2nd place (3 pts): His Majesty's Retainers by Pete and Kim Winz (ARC Fellowship)
Participating (1 pt): OSQUIP, WARLords, GAM, Waterdeep Boys Club, Magma Gamers

MOST NETWORK SERVICE 1/1 TO 4/30

PM Players - 1st place (4 pts)
We did not get any other entries in this event by April 30th. We have to receive written notice of entry in all service events before the close of the event.

BEST CLUB WEBSITE

1st place (4pts): Fellowship of the Black Spot, http://www.execpc.com/~brontomn/fbs.html
2nd place (2 pts): Greater LA RPG Council, http://members.aol.com/glarpgac
Participating (1 pt): Death Warmed Over, DragonWing RPS, the Mob, Clarksville Gamemasters Guild, Magma Gamers, UCC, CARP, and the Lost Merchant's Guild.

table talk

POLAR BEARS, MONKEYS AND THE DECALTHON SCORES

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TOTALS SO FAR:

PM Players	23
ARC Fellowship	13
Black Spot	12
DAWN	11
OSQUIP	7
DWO	7
WARLords	6
Black Hand	5
DragonWing RPS	5
Mob (The)	5
GLRPGC	5
Waterdeep Boys Club	4
GAM	3
DOGS	3
Clarksville GM Guild	3
GEAR	2
Magma Gamers	1
UCC	1
CARP	1
Lost Merchant's Guild	1

LIVING CITY STAFF UPDATE

As most of you know, Carl Buehler decided that he did not have the time necessary to devote to continuing on as Campaign Director of Activities. After much deliberation amongst the Directors, and feeling that promoting from within was the best way to deal with the situation, it was decided that we would ask Troy Daniels to step in and assume the position of Director of Activities. Mr. Daniels agreed to assist the Campaign in this role, and is now the new Campaign Director of Activities. All responsibilities and powers that were formerly invested in Carl now belong to Troy. As he has, at one time or another, been responsible for most of the activities that now fall under his purview, we believe that he will be able to continue with Carl's good work, and help us all get everything lined up for our Mass Presentation at the GEN CON® Game Fair.

While I'm on the subject of announcements, I would also like to announce the addition of Brian Burr to the campaign staff, in a new position that I felt needed to be created. As I have been quite swamped with other duties in my sphere, it has become increasingly difficult for me to have the time necessary to keep the membership informed of the goings on of the staff and the campaign as a whole. As this is a very vital part of the overall strategy to make this campaign greater than it was, I decided that I would need someone who could serve in that capacity alone. After talking things over with the rest of the board, it was decided that Brian be asked to work in the role of Public Relations. Brian has agreed to assist me in the manner, for which I am most grateful. Brian is a very visible player in the campaign, and seems very enthusiastic about serving in this capacity. While a detailed description of his duties would not be appropriate here, a general synopsis of them is as follows:

- He is responsible for getting information out to the general membership regarding what we, as a staff are doing and where the campaign is going.
- He will also be responsible for getting information to the campaign staff, and especially the board, regarding concerns that the membership may have with what is happening in the campaign.
- He will serve to feel out how the membership might react to a given change in the campaign, before such changes are implemented, and get feedback to the staff.

These are the most important of his duties, but not the extent of them by far. He will be working very closely with me to ensure the membership remains our focus, and maintains our attention. Brian can be reached at LCPRguy@rpga.net.

Thank you for reading patiently, and if any of you have any questions, don't hesitate to let me know.

Brooks Banks
LC Campaign Director, Information/Security
LCInfo@rpga.net

table talk

CHARITY WORK IN FLORIDA

(This was done at the Weekend in Ravens Bluff in Florida. If you do charity work, we'd love to hear about it so we can tout you to the masses too.)

On behalf of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Central Florida, thank you for your generous donation of $700.00 raised at your convention through the charity auction. We believe that helping to fulfill the wish of a seriously ill child is a loving and meaningful gesture. Your support of our organization is greatly appreciated.

Your gift will help fund the wish of Benjamin, a 16-year-old from Seminole County who suffers from Orbital Rhabdomyosarcoma. This disease arises in the skeletal muscle, and causes fatigue, hair loss and nausea. Chad, which is what he prefers to be called, is an avid in-line skater. His wish is to go to an in-line skating camp in California and also meet celebrity skaters. Chad and his family will spend five fabulous days in California where he will be surprised and given all the skating gear one needs, and actually meet and skate with celebrity in-line skaters. In additional to that, he will see all the sights of L.A.! There will be loads of pictures and loads of fun! This will definitely be an unforgettable experience.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation of Central Florida is a not-for-profit organization whose sole purpose is to fulfill the favorite wish of any child between the ages of 2 1/2 and 18 who has a diagnosed life-threatening illness. On behalf of Chad and all the children we serve, we thank you for your generosity and compassion.

Sincerely,
Robert J. Kinney
Executive Director

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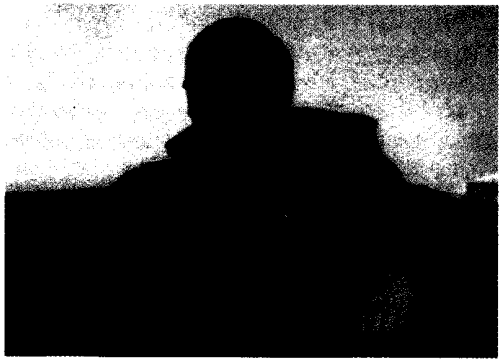

member spotlight

BY STEVE JAY

GREG DREHER - AN ACTUAL ACTUARY STUDENT. LOOK IT UP.

1) How old are you and how long have you been gaming?

I'm 25 ... and started gaming with the red box DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS® game, somewhere around age 8. It just happened to be a game that neighborhood kids in Dubuque, Iowa played. Those games were just hack-and-slash dungeon crawls, with almost no roleplaying involved, but they sure were fun!

I moved away two years later, and didn't play very often after that. I mostly DM'ed, rather Monty Haulish adventures, for small groups. These games were set in a campaign world I created, which is to this day little more than a large map and ideas in my head. Several AD&D® modules I wrote for the RPGA® Network are set there, however, including *All of the Credit, Madman Island, The Guild of Thieves, A Mission for Arabel, A Mission for Arabel 2, Business As Usual,* and *The Princeless Bride*.

2) How did you get started in the RPGA?

My RPGA membership was a gift for my 16th birthday. I would have preferred a car. I didn't actually do anything with my membership (for awhile) but I liked POLYHEDRON® magazine.

Chimera (the University of North Carolina's gaming and fan convention) sponsored a convention, Chimeracon 9, and there happened to be some RPGA-sanctioned AD&D adventures there. Two of the events were very memorable – *The Paper Chase* and *Chain of Souls*. I remember listening to the introduction of *The Paper Chase*, character sheets kept face down, and groaning in realization, "We're going to be playing these origami figures!" I thought both "What a horrible thing to do to us players" and "This is going to be fun!" That unusual adventure, and the totally unique characters of *Chain of Souls*, showed me that RPGA adventures offered me something different from my home campaign, and I enjoyed that difference.

3) How did you get into writing for the RPGA?

I had read a number of unusual adventures in POLYHEDRON and ... I remembered seeing a "DM Invitational" tournament design competition mentioned in some past POLYHEDRON Magazine. In the summer of 1994, I came up with the idea for six characters with interrelated secrets and the seeds of an adventure they were all tied to on two levels. I wrote the character backgrounds, then became busy and never finished the adventure.

Next summer, I got the issue of POLYHEDRON Magazine announcing the 1995 competition about one week before submissions were due. I somehow finished the adventure that week, edited it the Saturday it was due, and got it off to the post office to be postmarked about 10 minutes before it closed. If that module got ignored, I probably wouldn't have written another. But *All of the Credit* won, and now I've written or co-written 23 rounds of AD&D events.

4) I know you are the LIVING JUNGLE™ database coordinator and that you won the 'Search For The Sage' contest at the GEN CON® 1998 Game Fair.

It took a while to get the information to create the (LIVING JUNGLE) database, but eventually I got enough old Who's Who forms to make a usable database. One of my favorite aspects of the campaign is the great variety of unusual character races. The LIVING JUNGLE has tribes with different outlooks and interesting histories, and a good continuing story arc, but unless you play, you're not going to see it. I wrote an adventure capitalizing on these strengths (*Spirit of Ash*).

One thing which is good about the LIVING CITY™ campaign is the opportunity for players to fit into positions in the campaign. The "Search for the Sage" competition was the first such opportunity that I saw in the LIVING JUNGLE campaign. "Sage" certainly seemed like an appropriate position for Ffft (my LIVING JUNGLE character), who sometimes has the Intelligence of 3 or 4 other characters put together.

5) You also run some RPGA game days, don't you?

I've done seven LIVING CITY game days, two LIVING JUNGLE game days, and a classic game day. One way in which I've been able to play almost all LIVING CITY events is by strategically selecting those LIVING CITY events I missed!

6) What do you do in your non-gaming life?

I am an actuary. Look it up. I've had to explain it too often. Actually, I really can't call myself an actuary. I'm an actuarial student. That's yet another term that's confusing. I'm not in school anywhere. "Actuarial Student" is the common term for someone doing actuarial work who is still taking the exams necessary for professional accreditation.

I attend a lot of conventions from mid-May through August, and mid-November through February. The whole reason for this is that I need to spend the other times focusing on these exams. In fact, I should be studying right now. ■

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internet 101

FINDING THE "UNKNOWN" ON THE WEB BY ED GIBSON

The topic of this month's issue of POLYHEDRON® *Magazine* is "Exploring the Unknown," but I'd like to take a moment of your time before we get started. I'd like to thank former POLYHEDRON editor Jeff Quick for his confidence in me as the Internet 101 column begins its second year. I also want to thank Robert Wiese for his continuing support. The lack of web site suggestions from readers has been my only disappointment during the past year.

The Internet continues to grow in importance within the gaming and other industries, a trend which won't change any time soon. There's a wealth of information on the World Wide Web (WWW) and I encourage everyone to take a look at what is available. Many public libraries offer free Internet access and schools frequently offer free or inexpensive rates to students.

As an incentive for everyone to make the effort to get online and explore the Internet, Robert has agreed to furnish prizes for a contest. Submit your favorite gaming web sites for the RPGA URL (Uniform Resource Locator) contest.

1. The RPGA will furnish prizes for the top three entries.
2. Entries must be received by October 1, 1999.
3. Winning entries will appear in the February 2000 issue of POLYHEDRON. Other entries may be included in a Readers' URLs section of the Internet 101 column in future issues.
4. Web sites should be suitable for viewers of all ages.
5. Web sites which are applicable to multiple gaming genres will be ranked higher than those which are specific to a single genre.
6. In the event of duplicate entries, the first one submitted will be the winner. In the event of ties, a winner will be drawn randomly.
7. There is a limit of three entries per RPGA member, and you must be an RPGA member to enter.
8. Winning entries will be determined by RPGA and outside judges.
9. All judge decisions are final.

Among the government agencies which are suitable for use in modern games, one of the most secretive is the National Security Agency (NSA). The NSA is suitable as a black-helicopter flying, cattle-mutilating foe or as an ally or employer of your player characters. The official NSA web site is http://www.nsa.gov. The NSA site offers declassified documents related to past intelligence gathering activities and you can even investigate employment opportunities.

An alleged copy of the NSA employee handbook can be found at http://www.umd.umich.edu/~nhughes/html docs/nsa.html. I've never seen the genuine article, but this is consistent with similar security documents I've seen. For a great gaming prop, print off a copy of the handbook for each player. Then visit your local office supply store and pick up a red ink pad and a "Confidential" rubber stamp. Have fun stamping every page and hand-number each player's copy of the handbook. Finally, write a brief cover letter for your characters to sign promising to follow the defined procedures and threatening dire, but unspecified consequences for failure to abide by the established rules.

If the bad guys are going to take over the world, they may as well start with the President of the United States at http://www.whitehouse.gov. Information is available on tours and events, but probably the most useful information is a map of the White House area found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Tours/map.html. It offers an excellent overview of the area, ideal for allowing your PCs to attempt to protect the President from marauding aliens or infiltrate the White House to dispatch the President's alien double.

Now the President may not be at the White House, but off at a political fundraiser. Maybe at the San Diego Convention Center, http://www.sdconcourse.com/facil. This provides a map of the convention center, theater and meeting rooms. Just the thing you need for a scientific conference, a terrorist takeover, or a gaming convention.

Finally, many horror role-playing games require research into things man was not meant to know before the threat can be identified and defeated. So it's time to go to the library. Take your pick between Webster Library, http://juno.concordia.ca/tour/woutline.html and Vanier Library at http://juno.concordia.ca/tour/van/voutline.html. Both library layouts provide the necessary information for PCs to explore the library in search of rare tomes, either during normal business hours or covertly.

That's all for this issue; if you have any questions or suggested sites for this issue's contest, send them to polyhedron@wizards.com. ■

Nether Mukshar is one of those places everyone forgets–and later wishes they hadn't.

Shuldribrand Mroster
Mage Royal of Zindalankh
In conversation with Volo
Year of the Arch

Our tour of the Border Kingdoms this month looks at the last of the three Mukshar realms, a land often (and unjustly) forgotten—but quite possibly the cradle of future Realms-wide importance; a 'backlands' realm called:

NETHER MUKSHAR

The third and most prosperous of the three Mukshar realms, Nether Mukshar is a smallish land of rolling hills. It's been logged over twice, but now boasts healthy woodlots, and the visitor will find its rolling reaches dotted with small farms amid the trees and sprawling 'high meadow' wilderlands.

Nether Mukshar knew many long years of lawlessness, wherein banditry and unchecked monster depredations reduced its civilized population to a few scattered holds, but today it has a strong, battle-ready ruler, High Duke Darvert Flameblood (NG hm F11). Once a low-ranking warrior in Tethyr, the Duke saw much monster-patrol service, and remains shrewd and always wary despite his snow-white hair and age-aching limbs. He equips and trains a competent force of mounted men-at-arms who ride with crossbows, lances, and swords at the ready, patrolling in groups of a dozen or more, and doing so often.

The druuth (small doppleganger bands, each led by a mind flayer) raiding out of High Mukshar and through Middle Mukshar are an increasing danger to Netherans, and the High Duke has taken to hiring adventuring bands to hunt these menaces down. Over thirty groups have served under him for a season or two over the last decade, and as the druuth become more numerous, the High Duke sends out more agents to travel through the Border realms and hire even more adventurers. The source of the ducal riches (which seem expansive) remains something of a mystery.

Flameblood will house, feed, train and equip adventurers free of charge, in addition to the ten gold pieces per month and one tenday off in every four to do as his hirelings please (including undertaking adventuring forays outside the realm), but he takes a dim view of treachery, and seems to have at least one servant or ally hidden in Nether Mukshar who can magically eavesdrop on the minds and unguarded-when-in-private-surroundings tongues of his hirelings.

Though a traveler will search in vain for good maps of this part of the Border Kingdoms, and see little sign of borders while on the roads, Nether Mukshar takes the shape of a shield with a flat or horizontal top, and edges curving down to a point, at the south. At its northwestern point stands the small but impressive fortress of Dalonstal Keep, built by the High Duke atop a crag surrounded on three sides by boggy ground. Its soaring towers command a view far across Middle Mukshar, and it's known to have been equipped with ballistae and catapults that can hurl spear-like giant crossbow bolts, rocks, or flaming debris down on undesired intruders.

At the northeastern corner of the realm stands Castle Torn, the Duchal castle, a vast fortress of many linked keeps and wards that houses a village, and climbs a ridge like some sort of long and stony dragon. It has grown rapidly in prosperity as a refuge from strife elsewhere in the Borders, since the Duke encouraged various healers to dwell and practice in its most easterly wards (conveniently close to the graveyard that climbs down the slope into the neighboring Grand Duchy of Shantal).

In roughly the center of shield-shaped Nether Mukshar stands the village of Clovarren, where farmers hold a market every tenday, and there's a mill and large horse-breeding and training establishment. Except for the border trails, used mainly by the Duke's warriors, all roads in Nether Mukshar lead to Clovarren, and meet there among a labyrinth of fenced camping-paddocks (free for use by all, though the Duke's men will forcibly move anyone who camps there for more than two markets—that is, a three-day market plus a tenday and then the next three-day market) and horse-ponds.

There are rumors of something lurking at the bottom of one of the ponds (every tale disagrees as to which one) and

emerging, dripping, by night to drag down, drown, and devour folk and small beasts nearby, but when (from time to time) the Duke's men have gone hunting in earnest, no water monster has ever been found.

Clovarren is home to a local 'character' of increasing fame and importance in the Border realms: Borlden Tallowstag, who's become something of an 'adventuring sage.' This blind old grizzled ex-warrior knows many useful contacts, unexplored treasure sites, surviving retired adventurers, and active adventurers in the Borders, Turmish, the lands around Westgate (though not that city itself), and Sembia, and tries to keep up with the latest news from those parts of adventurers' exploits—and fates. "Old Tallowstag" has proved useful to several adventuring bands, and the High Duke has provided him with a vigilant bodyguard to prevent the loss of such a 'money draw' from the realm.

Adventurers visiting Nether Mukshar typically spend much coins on gear, and Flameblood wants to see their continued arrival for years to come—not just for the wealth they spread or their availability to him as hirelings, but to keep the pride of the realm from becoming too important, and challenging Darvert Flameblood's authority.

And what is this 'pride of the realm?' Well, it's the reason the formerly narrow and overgrown trail south from Clovarren is now broad and rubble-paved, with new bridges at the once-sleepy sheep- and goat-farming hamlets of Barnhallow and Phendree. That road winds on from Phendree, climbing the rolling hills to the highest point of the realm, in its southernmost reach, right at the point of the shield. There, atop Hareph's Tor, stands the pride of the realm.

Edgestone House is a stout, sloping-walled fortress that looks more like a strange castle than the newly-founded monastery to Gond that it is. Its name comes from its gateposts: huge cylindrical granite pedestals upon which rest smooth-squared blocks of granite, each balanced on one corner. These markers are held together by magic, and can be commanded to emit rays of hostile magic to defend the monastery against attack; many Netherans witnessed their discharges melt away shrieking wyverns to nothingness in midair, scales and then flesh beneath before dissolving the bones and all.

Within the walls of Edgestone, Master Albrar Thalonshen (LN hm P10) leads a holy fellowship of 14 Seeker monks and 16 lay followers, all of them crafters skilled in the making of articulated joints, fastenings, and parts of exacting dimensions and strength out of metal (including alloys) and wood. Several of the most senior Seekers are inspired inventors, and all of the Edgestone Consecrated dedicate themselves to the making and selling (one item may be sold for every one given freely to a Netheran or a traveler judged in need of it) small, practical everyday innovations, from treadle-pumps and hat-lanterns to cattle-gates and measuring-hopper grain-chutes.

They seek to cement their growing popularity with the people by their gifts of locks, latches, lamps, and the like, and by holding 'open' rituals which usually revolve around all of the clergy assembling a useful machine (a thresher, say, or a mobile, wagon-borne log-lifting crane) from a pile of prepared parts, while singing hymns of praise to Gond and chanting prayers.

Warmed by the growing power and influence of Edgestone, Nether Mukshar has become a haven to crafts-folk and inventors. The High Duke welcomes them and the prosperity they bring, but guards against attacks on his realm and subjects (inventors and crafters are attractive candidates for kidnapping), and against the clergy of Edgestone or anyone else challenging Duchal authority. Crafters who settle in either Dalonstal Keep or Castle Torn will be watched very closely by the Duke's agents to ensure they aren't spies for the Consecrated of Gond or for 'foreign powers.'

For his part, the Master of Edgestone smilingly avoids all comment on politics, the High Duke, or the future intentions of the monastery . . . and tensions are easily hidden in the flow of coin that has made the realm come alive in recent years.

The Gondar may have brought much wealth, but the capable and even-handed rule of the High Duke made prosperity possible, just as his reign was made possible by the 'Nether Lord' Cartreth Lionshar before him, and Ibryn 'Lord of Bandits' before that; three very different but effective rulers raised Nether Mukshar out of lawlessness.

The Nether Lord was a farmer-knight whose passions were building roads and slaughtering monsters; the Lord of Bandits was the first brigand to desire peace through might; he slew or drove out all who challenged his authority, making a 'safe area' in a realm that had known none for many a long year. ■

Elminster

Everwinking Eye

BY ED GREENWOOD

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city stories

THE HALL OF MYSTERY: TEMPLE OF MYSTRA IN RAVENS BLUFF BY CARL BUEHLER

The worship of Mystra has expanded over recent years, and with the destruction of the magic-dead temple of Mystra in Ravens Bluff, a new temple has been built. It is a grand, stone complex (lot UTS40) located at the SE Corner of Thayverdasz Way and Quevver Street in the Skimbles neighborhood of the Uptown District. The temple is called "The Hall of Mystery."

The Hall of Mystery is a fortress as well as a temple. Given the destruction of the previous temple by tanar'ri it is little surprise that the structure is over-engineered by a factor of at least four, with blue granite as the primary construction material. The temple has several unusual defenses to compliment the personnel on hand. Although the temple routinely buys supplies locally, the temple is not dependent on outside supplies because anything required is produced using spells. The entire temple complex scrambles teleportation magic such as teleport without error, even for creatures such as tanar'ri. Potent glyphs and wards abound, especially in sensitive areas. Two stone statues of female warriors with halberds guard the front doors. Of course, they detect as magic, as most of the temple does. Most of the guards around the temple appear to be magical constructs: doll golems, gargoyle golems, and clay golems. Besides always being on duty and alert, the golems cannot be corrupted. Permanent fire purge spells blanket the library, record archive, and the roof.

The new Hall of Mystery is an L-shaped complex of five connected buildings. The 50-foot high buildings house four aboveground floors and two below grade floors; groundwater further down was too high even for magic to defeat. The roofline of the buildings is crenellated like a fortress castle and gargoyle golems peer over the edge and up at the sky. Behind the templ one finds a stable outdoor spell casting area, a topiary garden, a garden maze, an herb garden, and a kennel with healers for magical creatures.

The sanctuary of the temple has a lofted ceiling, two stories in the front and four stories in the back (over the altar), and a large glasssteel back wall adorned with the symbol of Mystra. Side balconies on the second floor overlook the area. The sharp observer will spy a large niche at the third floor level; only the Mystran priests know of the silver chalice there and its role in the Starflight ritual. The temple is always at a comfortable temperature in spite of the total lack of fireplaces.

It is rumored that elaborately protected vaults filled with exotic magical items can be found in the two lower levels of the temple, but dark rumors of the fate of meddlers keep all but the most fool-hardy away. The lower levels also hold record archives and mundane supplies.

With the destruction of the magic-dead temple, the focus of Mystran activity in Ravens Bluff has changed from containing dangerous magic to establishing a center of worship for the Vast. Dweomerkeepers from around the realms have begun to arrive in Ravens Bluff seeking positions within the temple organization. The worship of Mystra is burgeoning and the temple is beginning to establish a political agenda.

The temple actively participates in the Clerical Circle and supports a Knighthood known as the Keepers of the Mystic Flame. The high priest, Lord of Mystery Chester D'Marke, has focused on building the temple's political influence within Ravens Bluff.

Cataloging magic items, spells, and magical effects continues to be a service of the temple. Scholars of magic are on duty all hours to identify items and assist in dealing with the unusual variety of magical phenomenon found in Ravens Bluff. The temple prophecy priestess, Lady Pamela Legere, has much insight into magical threats to the Realms and is often able to provide cryptic clues for those seeking to deal with such threats.

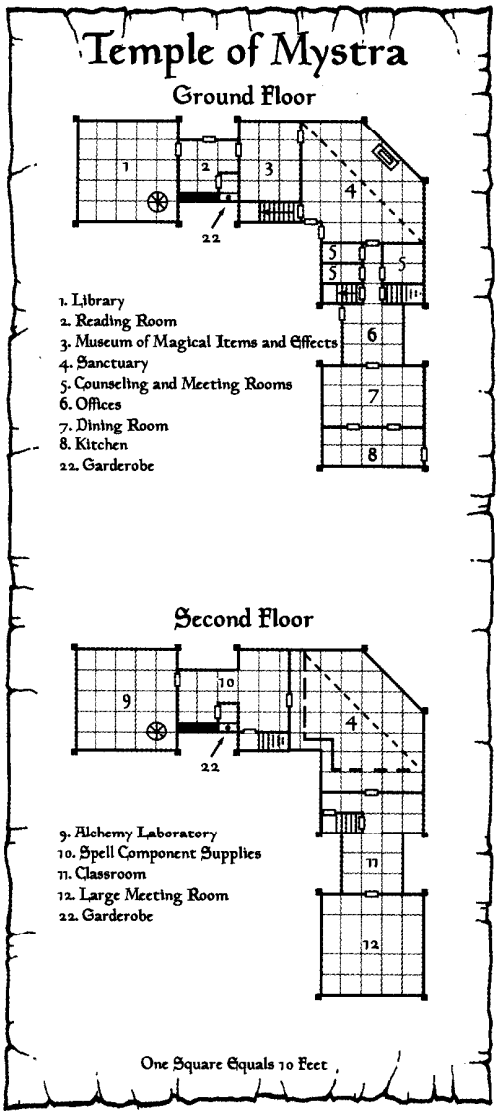
Chester D'Marke represents the temple on the Clerical Circle of Ravens Bluff and is the political face of the temple. The temple seer, Lady Legere, provides insight into the future as her erratic prophetic ability allows. The temple Azuthian advisor, Monique D'Starre, serves as the temple's liaison to the Wizard's Guild and to the temple of Azuth. The temple seneschal, Derry Hlamae, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the temple. The shift and duty priests, guards, and scholars manage their respective activities for the same work shift each day, often with an understudy who covers for them as necessary.

Lord of Mystery (High Priest): Chester D'Marke
Human male 14th level Dweomerkeeper

Age: 42 (actual 53)	**Alignment:** NG
Height: 5'11	**Weight:** 149 pounds
Hair: White	**Eyes:** Brown

D'Marke is the ultimate authority in the temple of Mystra but spends the majority of his time representing the temple and its interests on the Clerical Circle. His Temple Seneschal and his Azuthian Advisor afford him this luxury. The former is too preoccupied with running the temple efficiently to play politics and the latter is a close friend and confidant. A skilled diplomat and negotiator, D'Marke kept a low profile on the Clerical Circle while he studied the other members. When the public activities of the Keepers of the Mystic Flame thrust him into the spotlight, he handled himself with aplomb. He is known for his patience as well as wisdom and chooses the battles he fights most carefully.

Chester carefully chooses his wardrobe to reinforce his dignified image—rich, royal blue robes with white cowl and red cord trim on the sleeves, a seasonal-weight dark blue cape with a white lining, a dark blue skull cap, and sapphire-crusted jewelry.



Temple Seeress: Lady Pamela Anne Legere
Human female 4th level Dweomerkeeper

Age: 15	**Alignment:** NG
Height: 4'7"	**Weight:** 81 pounds
Hair: Auburn	**Eyes:** Aquamarine

Visions of the future are a daily occurrence for Lady Legere, the teenage prophetess of the temple. When her eyes darken to midnight blue, her sprite-like face becomes serious, her voice becomes distant, and you feel a shiver down your spine, you know that the future is being revealed. Few of her visions seem important at first, but all are documented in a magical tome by a coterie of family scribes who double as bodyguards. There are limits to Lady Legere's ability. First, she rarely sees anything not closely related to the weave or to magical phenomenon such as items or spells. Second, while her visions always come to pass over time, her ability to interpret what she sees is less certain. To date Lady Legere has not seen into the past, but a vision has foretold that she will one day.

Little of Lady Legere's time is spent in the temple, though chambers are reserved for her in event of emergency. Day-to-day she lives on her estate with her guardian, Lord Francois Anton Noire, a prominent member of the Wizard's Guild. She spends time with her tutors, rides horses, and occasionally attends social events in the city. Desperate for freedom from her carefully monitored life, "Lady Pamela" is prone to latch onto anyone who is not a normal part of her life for conversation. In public she chats of religion, spell theory, and horses. In the rare moments she can speak with someone privately likes to ask about Elminster. She is just beginning to take an interest in men. Lady Pamela finds all the fuss about her stifling and dreams of becoming an adventuring companion of Elminster though she knows that her dreams, unlike her visions, will not necessarily come to pass.

Pamela is known to always wear an amber gemstone on a mithril chain. The stone is rumored to be "The Mystic Ember," a family heirloom with unknown powers

Temple Seneschal: Derry Hlamae
Human male 9th level Cleric

Age: 26	**Alignment:** NG
Height: 6'3"	**Weight:** 190 pounds
Hair: Light Brown	**Eyes:** Hazel

The temple Seneschal is involved in all aspects of daily temple activities. He recruits adventurers for missions as directed by the high priest. He reviews the daily spell casting schedules for food preparation, cleaning, healing, item research, and other temple functions. He is second-in-command of the temple and acts with the Lord of Mystery's authority when the Lord is engaged elsewhere. Although the temple's Azuthian Advisor is his peer; he is not obligated to follow her advice.

Hlamae's rise to the position of Seneschal has been as dramatic as his change in personality. One rainy night a number of years ago he set out, his usual fearful and morose self, to deliver a message to a party of adventurers on behalf of a young priestess. Along the way he was charmed and duped into leading the adventurers to a false safe house where they were intended to hand over a rod of beguiling to the enemy. His role in the enemy's plans was made clear to him by D'Marke the next morning and Hlamae, distraught, fled to his lodging to consider what to do with his life. Hours of tearful grief later, he fell asleep. At dawn the next morning he awoke full of ambition and hope. As he lifted himself out of bed to face the new day, a magic mouth spell whispered to him, "You have been healed by the Keepers of the Mystic Flame."

Seneschal Hlamae has totally immersed himself in the challenge of his position to the point that he has few friends outside of the people he interacts with on temple business. Constantly looking for ways to squeeze more into each day, he has traded away most of his magic items for an ioun stone and a robe of cleantiness so he no longer has to spend time eating, drinking, or changing clothes. Hlamae structures his day around a schedule of six hours on and six hours off duty. Hlamae expects a lot of those who serve in the temple and encourages anyone unhappy with temple life to seek a position elsewhere.

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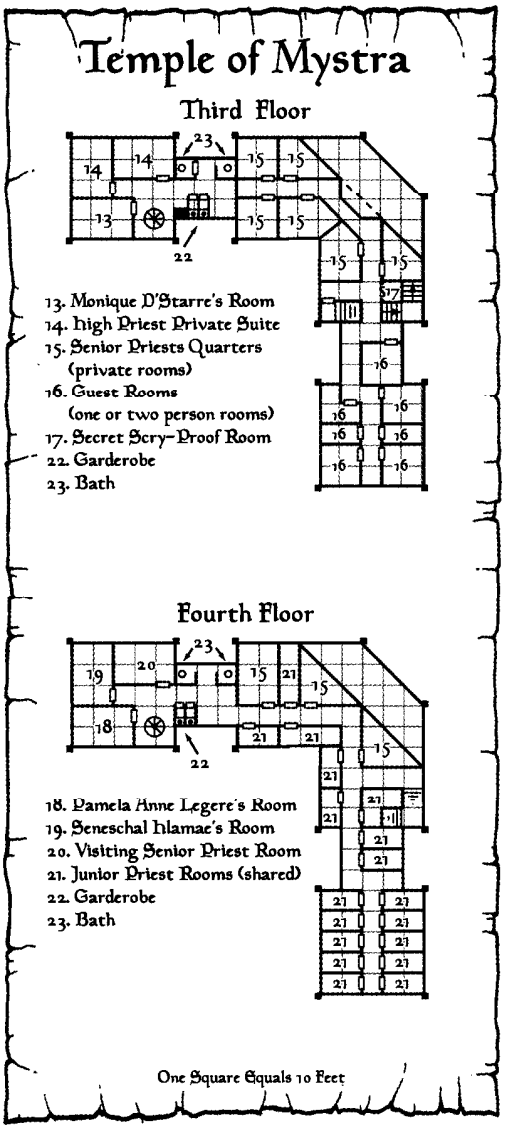

Azuthian Advisor: Monique D'Starre

Human female 11th level Magistrati (specialty priest) of Azuth

Age: 38 (actual 47) **Alignment:** LG
Height: 6' **Weight:** 152 pounds
Hair: Black **Eyes:** Grey

Advisor D'Starre is not a traditional Azuthian Advisor. Her decades-long friendship with Lord of Mystery D'Marke gives her considerable influence over temple policy and allows her a large degree of freedom in the temple of Mystra. Rumor has it that Monique and Chester are more than just good friends and that they had a relationship in their home city of Procampur. Her charm, wit, and beauty are obvious to all, but clearly Chester sees more in her.

Formerly a "First" of a temple of Azuth in Procampur, her kind heart and concern for the welfare of commoners made her unpopular among the less savory elements of the temple. Red Wizard agents became aware of the situation and hatched a plan to discredit "First" D'Starre. At the time Chester D'Marke was her Mystran advisor and he was able to foil the plot by a clever deception. Still, there was some damage to Monique's reputation and within six months, D'Starre found herself in Ravens Bluff as D'Marke's Azuthian Advisor at The Hall of Mystery.

Monique moves gracefully and, although she is very friendly towards the average citizen, she is precise and to the point in her speech. Monique has been sponsoring simple demonstrations of magic to young children in the various schools in hopes of identifying children with the aptitude for spellcraft early. ■

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techie toys

DECATHLON EVENT ENTRIES TO ADD TO YOUR FAVORITE SCI-FI ROLEPLAYING GAME

The Techie Toy Event in the 1999 Club Decathlon provided us with many interesting entries, and you may see one or two inserted into Polyhedron Magazine from time to time. Here we present two entries by Death Warmed Over. The event winner was Gauss Grenade, and the club also entertained us with the Tactomorphic Digital Sheathing. Enjoy.

GAUSS GRENADE: A DEVICE FOR THE SHADOWRUN GAME

By Paul Gosselin of Death Warmed Over

Every piece of electronic equipment, including cyberware, is susceptible to electromagnetic pulses (EMP). We all know what happens to electronic devices when an Atomic Bomb is airburst over a target city. Besides the obvious physical destruction involved, all electronic gear within close proximity of the detonation becomes unusable junk unless it was specifically shielded from the EM pulse.

The Gauss Grenade™ was originally designed by the same lunatics that created the cranial bomb. Gauss Industries has perfected that technology and devised a non-nuclear method of generating an EM pulse and limiting the radius of the effect to a manageable size. There are several different sized (and priced) EM generators available. You can purchase the generator as a separate unit or (more commonly) as a fully usable system.

EMP generators are differentiated only by the radius of the effective pulse that is released. Each generator can only be used once. The effects of the EM pulse are quite devastating to any electronic devices caught within the radius of the pulse when the generator "activates." All electronic activity ceases completely for 2d6 days within the affected device(s). The effects are not permanent, but only time or slow recharging can reverse the effects of the EM pulse. Devices that have mini-fusion power sources may lose containment and experience radiation leakage. All other electronic devices simply stop functioning. This includes unshielded vehicles, drones, cyberware, headware, cyberdecks, computers, telephones, etc.

For game purposes all power is drained from the affected apparatus for the duration of the effect as described above. The EM pulse effects are felt through walls, including reinforced concrete and steel. The only possible defense from these nasty toys is to be shielded specifically from EMP.

Note: The Gauss Grenade and Bomb come with magnetic casings. They will attach themselves to any ferrous object (like a cyberlimb or metal door). They will even attach themselves to armored vests (with plates).

TACTOMORPHIC DIGITAL SHEATHING: A STRANGE DEVICE FOR THE MEN IN BLACK ROLEPLAYING GAME

By Mark Barnabo

Range: Personal Body Points: 1

This substance was brought to us by the same aliens who brought us Silly Putty. It looks a lot like Silly Putty, but its ability to retain an extremely detailed shape makes it far more useful than the popular children's toy (although it isn't as much fun to play with). When the Tactomorphic substance is brought in contact with a warm item (human body heat or higher) it immediately spreads itself over the item, copying every nuance of the object. Exposure to a sudden burst of cold causes the Tactomorphic material to set. It will never again permanently change shape, although it is very elastic. Once set, the substance can be stretched, but it always resists, attempting to remain in its set state.

These properties make it ideal for copying a person's fingerprints and/or palm prints. Usually, an agent will apply the Tactomorphic Digital Sheathing to the target's hand(s). A quick blast from good old-fashioned bubblegum remover (otherwise known as freon) sets the material. What the agent is left with is the size and consistency of a rubber glove. The glove, however, contains a perfect copy of the target's palm print and fingerprints. Just peel it off the target, and you can keep it for future use. It is important to note that a person must have the same-sized hand or smaller to wear the "glove" as it were. If the user's hand is larger, the print becomes distorted as it stretches to fit.

The uses for this technology are numerous, but it has traditionally been used to bypass palm- and fingerprint-based security systems. A clever agent once used the substance to coat a piece of paper warmed under a lamp. He set the substance with freon, and was able to walk away with a copy of the document. Yes, the substance can pick up the tactile difference between the ink and the paper – we told you it was sensitive. Masks made from this substance are exact duplicates, but the nasty tendency for the substance to spread evenly poses a problem. To put on enough of the stuff to make a mask, some of the substance will almost certainly travel up the target's sinuses and down their throat. I'm betting nobody is ever going to need a mask that has that much detail. I mean, just imagine trying to put a mask on that comes with its own sinus system and a complete replica of the target's digestive system. It makes me feel tingly all over just thinking about it. The substance is non-toxic and is semi-permeable; that is, gases pass through freely but liquids (and solids) do not. Therefore if a target or agent swallows it or gets a noseful of it, nothing bad will happen. Well, I should say that the victim won't suffocate, but they will feel bad because their digestive system will break it down, and we are told that this process causes the victim to become nauseous (yuck). ■

GAUSS GRENADE SPECIFICATIONS

Generator	Pulse Radius	Possible Applications	Cost	St. Index	Legal
EMP-G1	1 meter	Grenade	200 ¥	4	2-K
EMP-G10	10 meters	Mortars, Missiles	14,000 ¥	6	1-K
EMP-G500	500 meters	Rockets, Bombs, Terror	250,000 ¥	9	1-K

Conceal Damage	Blast	Wgt.	Avail.	Cost	St. Index	Legal
Gauss Grenade	(G1)	6	Special - 0.25 14 days	250 ¥	4	2-K
Gauss LAW Missile	(G3)	2	Special -0.50 30 days	2,750 ¥	5	2-K
Gauss Missile	(G10)	-	Special -2.25 45 days	27,500 ¥	6	1-K
Gauss Rocket	(G500)	-	Special -4.50 120 days	300,000 ¥	9	1-K

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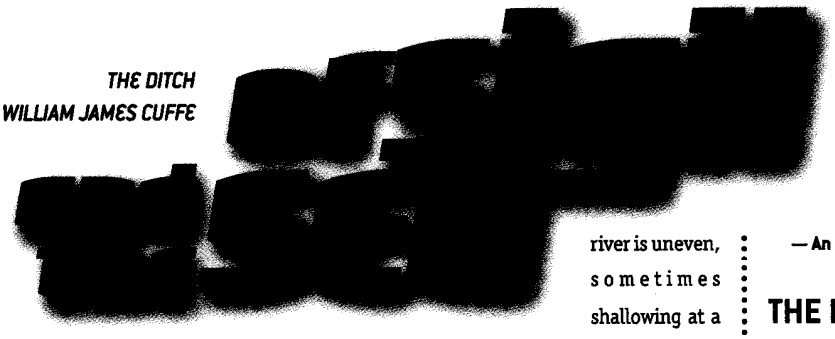
Most planewalkers think of Sigil, the City of Doors, as a landlocked metropolis cut off from the aquatic trade routes that profit its prime material cousins. Any blood worth his salt will tell you that is just so much screed, and will point an inquiring mind toward Sigil's largest body of water — the Ditch (see *In the Cage: A Guide to Sigil* by Wolfgang Baur and Rick Swan, pg. 49).

Located in the Lower Ward, the Ditch is a fifty-foot wide drainage aqueduct that starts from the Great Foundry (headquarters of the Believers of the Source) and winds its five-mile way to the very edge of the city, where its then trickling current disappears off the edge. The floor of the river is uneven, sometimes shallowing at a few mere feet to deepening at perhaps bottomless depths. Famous establishments such as the Black Sails tavern, the Styx Oarsman saloon, and the Speckled Rat bar are located along the Ditch's banks.



THE DITCH
BY WILLIAM JAMES CUFFE

Its waters are foul and polluted, both from the Ditch's extra-planar origins as a tributary of the Styx River, and from the citizens of the Cage who dump whatever (or whomever) refuse they can get away with. So corrosive are its waters that mere hours after dumping will transform a dead body into a nearly unidentifiable bloated carcass. As if in defiance of the lack of seasons in Sigil's smoggy climate, the Ditch's waters sometimes freeze over with an oily ice; other times it runs quick in rapids of greenish currents. Every five to eight months, the ditch-river thankfully receives a much needed cleansing as the River Oceanus sends a few thousand gallons of pure, clean water through the Ditch's length. This is a cause for celebration, and passers-by will witness shirtless children playing happily as their parents watch on in pride-full jubilance.

SUICIDE FALLS

Sigil's equivalent to a "lover's leap," Suicide Falls has the reputation of seducing lost, unrequited, and otherwise mismatched lovers to their supposed deaths. Not quite a waterfall in the strictest sense, the Ditch empties out into a delta that runs to the very spireward edge of Sigil in an eerie silence. It is perhaps the most easily accessible route to the edge of the Cage. Effectively leaping off the edge, jumpers simply disappear, their bodies never to be found. Harmonium officers often chalk up mysterious disappearances of adolescents as having "succumbed to the fall's siren."

On one of the multitude of tiny "islands" formed by the delta grows a flower called "the Last Kiss Blossom." With tiny, delicate blooms, the flower's two blush-hued petals resemble a pair of painted lips pursed in a kiss. With no medicinal value save that of a mediocre laxative, the bush remains relatively unmolested. However, young lovers often re-tell having heard rumors of those who have braved the fall's plunge with a last kiss blossom press to their lips, only to have survived and found their heart's desire along the Hinterlands. Like most rumors, there is more tale than truth in such stories. Still, love has a way of clouding a cutter's judgement...

"Love, in its many guises, leads to many the same ends as Hate..."

— An ominous Society of Sensation maxim

THE BRIDGE THAT SPANS WORLDS

This is a massive mithril and adamantite monstrosity that looms over the Ditch like a metal spiderweb fit for Lolth's own throne. Erected by a now-defunct faction called the Forgesmiths before the time of the Great Upheaval, this suspension bridge defines the framework for the portal that has become known as the Seafarer's Arch. So intricate and astounding is its craftsmanship and stark beauty that the Society of Sensation quickly dubbed it "one of the seven Wonders of the Multiverse," alongside Thoth's Library, the Modron Cathedral, and the Hollow World.

Records compiled by the Fraternity of Order for that time period are (much to the Guvner's chagrin) sketchy at best, making it unclear to graybeards whether the bridge was built as a framework around the Seafarer's Arch or if the portal was a munificent result of the bridge's construction. All that can be said with any confidence is that the viaduct got its name because of the plane-spanning portal that lies below it.

"Sigil is a city of over one hundred square miles, and if any berk is barmy enough to believe that a burg of that size could possibly trade for all it's needs by merchants trotting across the planes on foot, then I have got a bridge I can sell you for real cheap..."

— A Knight of the Cross Trade, to a Clueless Prime

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SEAFARER'S ARCH

Also known as the Seafarer's Portal or the Final Port-of-Call, the Seafarer's Arch is a special type of planar gate, unlike all the others that dot Sigil's architecture. According to the Rule-of-Threes, most portals fall within one of a trio of types — permanent, temporary, or shifting portals. However, the Seafarer's Arch does not quite fit into any one of these divisions. It is always located under the Bridge That Spans Worlds, like a permanent portal. While it functions as a normal portal does, requiring some kind of impetus to act as a key to allow travelers to pass through, the Seafarer's Arch has several different destinations at one time, like a shifting portal that simultaneously leads to multiple locations. Sailors need not wait a day or a week for the Seafarer's Arch to shift its destination as with a shifting portal, as all the Arch's destinations are accessible at all times. Lissandra the Gate-Seeker has dubbed this type of portal as a "Multiportal," a label she has worked hard to have officially recognized by the Portal Registry in the Hall of Information.

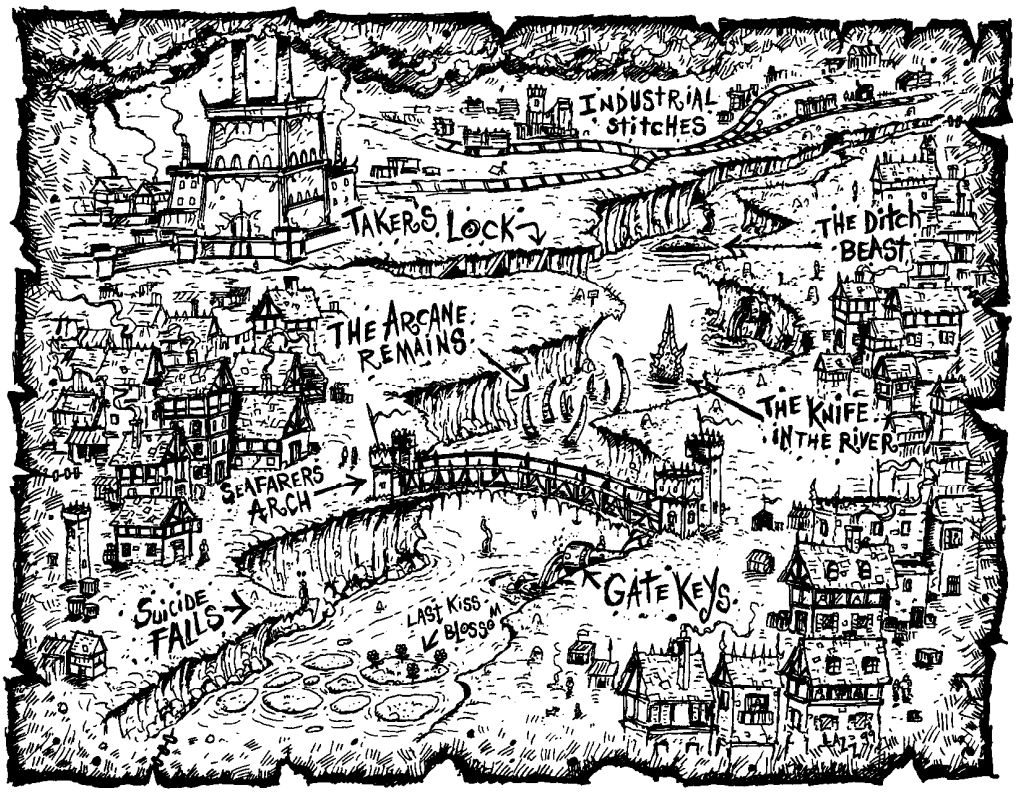
A ship wishing to use the Seafarer's Portal need not wait until its magical gate shifts to the proper destination. All it has to do is have the proper activation key for the port they have in mind. The specific gate key needs to be placed in a specially designed basket attached to the ship's bowsprit, as it is the first portion of a vessel to pass through the confines of the portal. Maintenance of the spritcage and insertion of the gate key are duties usually imposed or bestowed (depending on the crew's disposition) to the cabin boy. Spritcages vary in sophistication and design as widely as the bows of various ships. A Viking drakkar, for instance, might have its spritcage in the form of the gaping mouth of the ship's carved dragon-bow; or a garbage scow may have little more than a tarnished box as its spritcage.

GATE KEYS

Any portal needs a gate key to activate its plane-spanning magic, and the Seafarer's Arch is no different. While there are commonly known (or at least, relatively easily procured) gate keys to many prime worlds, items unique to these realms have also been known to function, such as a cinnabryl amulet to travel to the Savage Coast (RED STEEL™ Campaign Setting).

On the world of Toril (FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting), the Seafarer's Arch leads to a large open sewer pipe that leads from the city's Underdeep and empties into the Trackless Sea. The rapids below a moderately sized canyon in the Khalkist Mountains serves as the arrival point on Krynn (DRAGONLANCE® Campaign Setting). For Oerth (GREYHAWK® Campaign Setting), an oblong shoal of rocks in the Nyv Dyr serves as its portal. A waterfall in the kingdom of Cariele connects Sigil and Aebernys (BIRTHRIGHT® Campaign Setting).

Other places that have known links to the Seafarer's Arch are Ortho (the Harmonium's home plane), the Rock of



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Bral in Wildspace (SPELLJAMMER® Campaign Setting), and to Io's Blood Isles (COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ Campaign Setting). Finally, while the portal works both ways, some destinations make it more difficult — carrying a scarab through Seafarer's Arch will deposit a boat on the dry wastes of Amun-Thys, marooning it on the third layer of Arborea.

THE ARCANE REMAINS

It is well known that the Arcane, those mysterious blue giants from the phlogiston known for trading, are barred from the streets of the City of Doors; but what few know is just how this information became widespread. The Arcane Remains is how. Resembling the picked-over carcass of a beached behemoth, the Arcane Remains are the remnants of the first ship to pass through Seafarer's Arch from the outside. It was a regal craft, bejewelled and gilded with precious materials, its sails woven of the finest silk, its decks were carved of the richest wood. Its crew were aristocratic and noble, not at all the scurvy sea-dogs the imagination would assume, and its captain a regal giff admiral of astounding stature. Unfortunately, the craft's girth was greater than the width of the Ditch itself (some sixty cubits), and it ran aground in a disaster of catastrophic proportions. Whatever cargo the craft may have been carrying never made port; mere moments after its alighting on Sigil soil, the enigmatic Lady of Pain appeared, her mute shadow hacking the grounded ship like a butcher's cleaver. Now, its struts poke the sky like bony ribs, and the once-magnificent, massive bombard that ran the ship's length lists to the side, corroding and useless. None have dared search its half-submerged body, fearful that whatever reason the Lady had in gutting her might be applied to any bubber foolhardy enough to set foot in her. Should any barmy try and somehow succeed, they could be rewarded with treasure and weaponry beyond their wildest dreams — the giff are known to be quite fond of their bombards, arquebuses, and smoke powder...

"She who controls the powder, controls the multiverse..."

— Zadara the Titan, in one of her less than lucid moments...

THE KNIFE IN THE RIVER

Named after a witless play-on-words, the Knife in the River a gargantuan slice of metal jutting direct up from the muddy riverbed. Standing only a few meters away from the Arcane Remains, that ship's great bombard hangs mutely, its muzzle pointed directly at the metal monolith. Its rusting, patina-ed surface stained by the years, the Knife in the River is triangular in shape, with the apex buried deep into the brown fluid of the Ditch. The obelisk is roughly pocked and chipped, its top edge twisted like shredded wicker. Like a knife, one of the other sides is honed to a razor edge, still sharp despite the holes and erosion that have marred its surface.

Legend has it that the ship now known as the Arcane Remains did not give up the ghost without resistance. As the mute Lady of Pain advanced her silhouette on the beached craft, the Arcane crew, the giff captain, and its Spellweaver spellslinger let loose enough destructive power to have leveled the Outlands and cause Sigil to topple of the summit of the Spire. Such a deafening blast came from the vessel's glittering bombard that it was heard all the way to the Gate-towns. The culmination of that devastative attack, it is said, did what no blood thought possible — it wounded the Lady of Pain. Slamming into her with the force of the multiverse's wrath, the retributive Arcane tore a blade of off the Lady's halo of knives. As it plunged point first into the frothing morass of the Ditch, the Arcane craft was eclipsed in the Lady's shadow. The shrieks were so shrill that even today people call an anonymous cry in the night "the Lady's satisfaction."

Since then, the Knife in the River has become almost a holy symbol to Xaositects and the Revolutionary League. Even the Athar secretly covet it, more evidence to support their assertions that even the powers can be slain.

TAKER'S LOCK

Located roughly about half the length of the Ditch and half a mile outward from Seafarer's Arch, this artificial canal system operates under the auspices of the Fated. Originally, this stretch of the riverway ran shallow, almost to a trickle, thereby causing an incredible bottleneck for ships wishing to travel further inward into Sigil. The Fated, in their official role as the city's tax collectors, developed

WIZARD SPELL
Keycloak (Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 3
Range: Special
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Duration: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell is used by bloods who do not wish it be inconveniently whisked through a portal simply because the half-eaten loaf of rye bread in their pack is the gate key to a gnomish bakery in Dothion. By means of this spell, a number of items equal to the level of the caster are rendered "invisible" to portals, meaning an object that would normally activate a portal could, under this enchantment, be carried back and forth through the opening with no fear of triggering it. The spell lasts for a number of trips through any portal (regardless if the item is the portal's gate key) equal to the level of the caster. For example, a 6th level spellslinger could cast keycloak on his belongings, enchanting six different items so they could be carried six times each through any portal.

Any material item can be so enchanted, but only once per casting (a spellslinger could not cloak an individual item twice with the same casting). Multiple castings are not cumulative, the results protecting the item(s) as if a single spell was cast, refreshing it to its full duration.

An item is defined as either any one solid object (regardless of size), or any liquid, gas, or particulate matter (sand, dust, etc) portioned by its smallest basic unit of measure (dose, ounce, gram, etc). Portals that require spoken, thought, or emoted gate keys circumnavigate keycloak completely.

Many canny cutters use keycloak to safely carry extra gate keys that would normally be consumed by an activated portal. The spell was created by a ship's spellcaster when she discovered passengers had mysteriously disappeared just as the vessel passed through the Seafarer's Arch. The cause — they had inadvertently been carrying items that acted as gate keys to other destinations.

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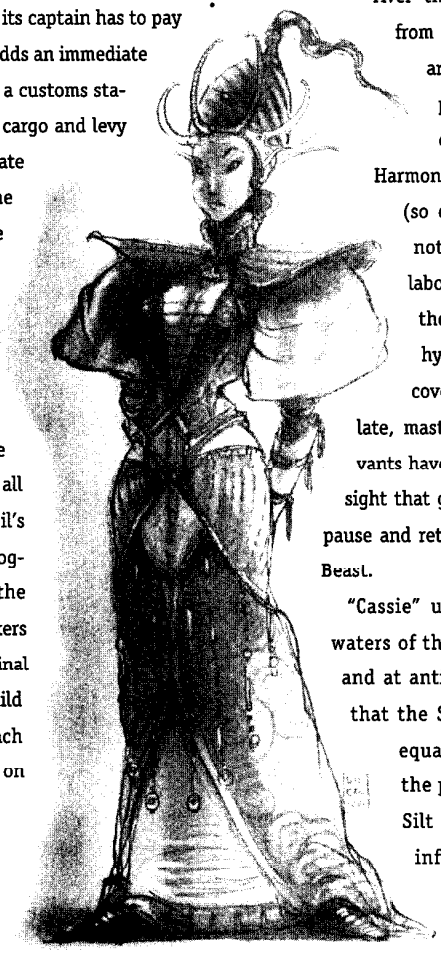
an idea of creating a series of great "doors". Their seams waterproof, these doors would form a series of spaces that could be filled with water. This way, ships could be ferried across the Ditch's bottleneck. Now, it doesn't take a Guvner to figure out that no Taker ever does anything out of charity. The Fated's true motivation for the Lock is to serve as a guarded gateway between the Cage and traders. If a ship wants to trade with Sigil, then its captain has to pay the toll to use the Lock. It further adds an immediate and convenient excuse to establish a customs station that would examine a vessel's cargo and levy any applicable taxes, even confiscate illegal materials. For a portion of the Fated's "operation expenses," the Harmonium agreed to assign a battalion to act as a port authority in case any vessel decided to refuse inspection. In a further economic maneuver that would make a Merkant proud, the Fated enforce a requirement that all loading and unloading done at Sigil's docks be completed using only recognized, accredited workers from the Guild of Teamsters (which the Takers will be happy to provide for a nominal sum). In return, the Teamster's Guild pay a registration fee (part of each member's monthly dues) to remain on the "sanctioned worker's list."



INDUSTRIAL STITCHES

Located adjacent to the Great Foundry is a trolley-track expanse of land owned and operated by the Believers of the Source. An ore preparation facility, teams of its workers push mine carts around the criss-crossing tracks in order to separate ores destined for the Foundry's enormous forges. It was nick-named the Industrial Stitches because chordwise from the other side of Sigil its tracks resemble cat-gut stitches pulled taut over a vicious wound. Dusty and covered in dirt, it is a major contributor to the pollution level of the Ditch. The facility's dumping of waste into the river has brought the ire of an extremist group called the Rosebringers (also known as the Beautification League). Their incessant picketing of the site has forced the need for regular Harmonium and Godsmen guards along the fences at all hours. While the sect has sent petitions to the Hall of Records and filed charges at the City Courts, most all who have encountered the Rosebringers dismiss them as little more than a lunatic fringe.

"Reduce, reuse, recycle..."

— a Decorator slogan in tune with the Rule-of-Threes

THE DITCH-BEAST

Over the years, superstitious and weak-minded cagers have reported sightings of "a giant beast swimming the river" that has been accused of everything from snatching babies from the very arms of their frightened mothers to plotting the downfall of the Lady of Pain. With almost certainty, the Harmonium have ensured that "Cassie" (so dubbed by rumor-mongers) does not exist. The dabus, magical laborers under the sole dominion of the Lady of Pain, have added to the hysteria with occasional illusions to cover up their own activities. But of late, masticated bodies of the Lady's servants have begun to wash-up on shore — a sight that gives even the Dustmen cause to pause and rethink the existence of the Ditch-Beast.

"Cassie" usually only appears while the waters of the Ditch run dark and polluted, and at antipeak. Beast-chasers point out that the Seafarer's Arch connects to an equally dark, polluted reservoir on the prime world of Athas called the Silt Sea — a body of water made infamous for its submerged, lurking monstrosities. Any one of those abominations could have easily slipped through the Seafarer's Arch under the cover of a traveling trade-vessel. It should be noted that "Cassie" has been spotted by witnesses on either side of the Taker's Lock. Harmonium investigators discount these sightings as hoaxes, since it seems obvious that the Fated wouldn't allow any thing, man nor beast, passage through the Lock without the applicable immigration fees being rendered.

The dark of the Ditch Beast is that sightings of "Cassie" are actually glimpses of the Kadyx (a beast that normally haunts the Slags in the Hive Ward) as it searches for water and sustenance. It has never been seen lumbering across the Lower Ward streets from the Hive, so there must be some subterranean connection between the Slags and the Ditch, probably through the Dabus catacombs. ■

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A MANUAL OF
DEXTERITY FOR WAR HORSES
BY PATRICIA A. JACKSON

A Manual of Dexterity for War Horses? No such magic tome exists, but perhaps one should. Of all the specialty weapons used in the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, the most under-utilized is the war horse. Most players fail to realize that character classes, such as cavalier and paladin, carry up to 1,200 pounds of extra weight! The war horse, as a fighting partner, can be as tried and true as any magical blade, and equally effective when properly employed.

The war horse comes in a variety of sizes: light, medium, or heavy. Various breeds are bred to perform in the areas of endurance, strength, or speed. They are coveted for color, conformation (how the animal is built), and character. So, you might ask, for all the bother, what does a war horse really do?

Charging lines, jousting, blocking polearms, parrying swords—the war horse can do all of these things and much more. In battle, the war horse becomes a squire, guarding the master's back and flanks. The horse's offensive power lies not only in its ability to strike and kick and bite. The real power is coordinating these defenses and delivering them in the most effective means possible during combat situations.

These techniques are known as airs above the ground. They represent the ultimate level of training in the horse. As demonstrated in Maneuver I below, the techniques are best captured when one pair or all of the horse's legs are in the air. Thus the term, airs above the ground. The movement known as the levade is the beginning stage for more complicated maneuvers that will follow.

THE LEVADE, MANEUVER I

"And what have we here?" The brigand said. "A pretty elfin maid in the wood?"

"A pretty elfin maid in the wood alone, brother," his companion corrected.

Saiji tightened her reins as the woods about her came to life. Within moments, the young cavalier was surrounded by a score of bandits. Brandishing swords and polearms, they had the look of wild dogs about them

Saiji's war horse Bastelles promptly responded to the cue from her spur. Balancing her and his own massive weight, the stallion reared up on his hind legs and grunted a fierce challenge to the vagabonds.

OF CLASSICAL ARTS

The invention of the war horse precipitated a need for an animal that would willingly carry the weight of an armored rider, heavy swords, and other appointments. This necessity was compounded by the need for an animal intelligent enough to learn important cues and maneuvers. A gentle disposition and an enduring spirit were also required to insure the high degree of tolerance necessary for the rigors of training. Most of these qualities can be reproduced in generations of mares and stallions; but courage was something that could not be bred into the animal.

Courage comes from trust. And the trust of a war horse is the greatest asset any warrior could possibly hope to obtain. Mares (the female horse) are exceptional mounts, as they are openly bold, methodical, and long-enduring. The prevailing quality of the feminine sex is its sensitivity. As such, mares are somewhat difftcult to comprehend and tend to require extra care throughout the duration of their careers. The reckless cavalier will find mares too stubborn or too difficult to ride, thus avoiding the gender. But the sympathetic handler will find a boon companion, whose sensitivities are rivaled only by their courage and depth of heart.

Stallions (the male horse) are overly bold and somewhat reckless. Exceedingly powerful mounts, they fear little, and as a consequence of this brash courage, are difficult to train. They tend to retain less without proper daily training and may prove untrustworthy in certain situations. Moreover, stallions have a tendency to bond with a partic-

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ular person. This admirable loyalty is highly prized among cavaliers and paladins; however it is one of their greatest faults. The horse who bonds with its rider will be difficult to retrain should its master be slain. It will be resistant, disobedient, or worse, unrideable. Rogue stallions can become remorseless killers. They have no fear or tolerance of man.

These are general observations and should by no means be taken as canon. The stallion is often the favorite of players, who generally have no hindsight into the horse world. On more than one occasion, both in the game and in the real world, stallions have proven themselves exemplary creatures of unequivocal character.

Geldings (the castrated males) are the more reliable. Having few of the quirks common to stallions or the sensitivities of mares, the gelding is the joining ground of potential and consequence, power and endurance. Frequently, the gelding is a victim of a flaw. If the owner went through the trouble of castrating the animal, he did so to discourage passing on some fault to future foals or as a means of curbing temperment.

Once gelded, the horse's only value lies in its abilities to perform. As long as he can measure up to the duties of his status, he is in little danger of going hungry. However, as age sets in, along with maladies brought on by advanced maturity, there is a dark side. Unlike mares and stallions, who may bear young well into their advanced years, the gelding ceases to be of value once his vitality is spent.

Should the owner be a wealthy noble, the gelding may find himself turned over to a child to act as a schoolmaster. He might be retrained as a lady's horse for quiet rides on the manor. But where funds are tight and space is restricted to those animals who earn their keep, the age-troubled gelding may find himself in the employ of a farmer, earning a much different keep. While deemed ignoble, this is a far kinder fate then simply being fed to the hounds.

THE CAPRIOLE, MANEUVER II

"If you leave now, you may leave with your lives," Saiji said. "You'll have until I reach the city gates to make your escape. You would do well to use the time wisely." She dropped the spur from Bastelles' side and waited as the war horse settled beneath her.

"Did you hear that, brother?" the second brigand cried. "The elf gives her word that our lives will be spared if we make off now."

"I heard her." the leader replied. "Aye, milady, we shall make good our escape, but not without sampling a bit of the Knights' Council's finest." He signaled his men in the rear.

As the bandits started toward his hindquarters, Bastelles bowed his great head. Moving beneath the pinch of spurs, he kicked out suddenly with both hind legs. Muscles bulging at his shoulders the war horse took a half-step forward, absorbing, the shock of the brigans' bone.

THE MANEUVERS

A *Manual of Dexterity for War Horses*? Perhaps a more appropriate name would be a *Manual of Performance for War Horses* (and their masters). The airs above the ground are breath-taking spectacles that delight both experienced horsemen and those who know nothing more than the beauty of these wondrous animals. But as with all things, there lies a purpose behind these ingenious maneuvers, which stem from a common human affliction—war.

As with the sword, the horse is an essential tool of defense and offense. The capriole is an advanced maneuver designed to protect the rear flank. Should foot soldiers advance into this area, they are greeted with a double-barreled shot from the hindquarters. The maneuver is executed by the horse raising into a half-rear, from which he jumps high and forward, kicking out the hind legs. If executed correctly, the soles of the feet are turned upward, and the horse then lands on all four feet

To demonstrate the power of a horse striking from the rear, imagine a martial artist kicking a block of concrete at full force. Stone dust and debris is all that will remain. Now multiply this force 300 times and you have the nominal equivalent of how hard a horse can kick. Horses have been known to kick down reinforced stall walls. The end result of a metal-shod hoof connecting with flesh and bone, even armored flesh and bone, does not present a pleasant picture.

The courbette is an intimidating maneuver that may be used to break through enemy ranks. It is executed as the horse rears upright on its hind legs and then jumps or hops forward several times on its rear legs. The action effectively removes the rider from immediate danger to the fore, such as charging foot soldiers, arrows, and polearms. The horse's upper body acts as an effective shield. For attacks from the flanks, it allows the rider freedom to defend from a point of advantage over the enemy. The movement also frees the horse to strike with its forelegs, causing damage to weapons or bodies that come too close.

This is a movement undertaken with great care as it exposes the unarmored belly of the horse. While it would be a daring feat to get in close enough to harm the animal, it is not completely implausible. One good thrust of a sword or halberd into this vulnerable area would end the promising days of any great war horse.

The croupade is another intimidating maneuver that has devastating results on the enemy who ventures too close. The execution begins as the horse rears upright on its hind legs and then jumps vertically with its hind legs drawn up to its belly. This maneuver can be used in a desperate situation where the rider is completely surrounded on all flanks. While in the air, the horse is free to kick with both its hind feet or the fore. The rider is free to act accordingly with an appropriate weapon of choice (i.e. sword, flail, or mace). The weight of a fully armored horse and its armored rider, landing on simple foot soldiers, is ghastly and can quickly splinter the hopes of any foolhardy heroes.

Despite questions of dexterity, there should be no penalties to the rider for executing these maneuvers. If one is accomplished enough to cue the horse to perform accordingly, then he or she is accomplished enough to stay in the saddle and not be hampered, except under extraordinary circumstances (i.e. while the horse was executing

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the croupade, an ogre tackles his hindquarters from the left side).

The final maneuver is the ballotade. It is accomplished when the horse half-rears, then jumps forward with the rear legs tucked under his hindquarters. During the execution, the horse may kick out behind with his rear legs or strike with his knees and forefeet. This action can be used against charging troops or those in retreat. It is most effectively employed in the latter, if the rider is of a mind to take prisoners.

THE COURBETTE, MANEUVER III

Staring at the mangled bodies of his companions, the brigand leader's jaw tightened with rage. "Get her!" he ordered. "Drag her down!"

The brigands charged from the front and sides. Keeping a wary eye on her perimeter, Saiji watched Bastelles' ears flatten against his skull. Grinding his teeth against the bit, the war horse waited for her cue. As the intruders approached, he reared upright on his hind legs.Prompted by the spur at his side, he hopped forward several times into the midst of their enemies and began striking at them with his forelegs. The weight of his hooves smashed and dented metal helms, crumpling them harmlessly beneath his feet.

The war horse gently lowered himself to the ground and backed away. In the underbrush at his feet, the cries of the injured and dying echoed beneath the canopy of the trees. Bastelles grunted in warning to the dark shadows moving about behind him, flagging his tail, prepared to strike at them should his mistress command.

AIRS ABOVE THE GROUND

Ballotade: the horse crouches in a half-rear, jumps forward with the rear legs held tightly under the hindquarters before landing on all four legs.

Capriole: the horse crouches in a half-rear, jumps high and forward, kicking out with the hind legs so that the soles of the feet are turned upwards, before landing on all four legs.

Courbette: the horse rears upright, then jumps forward several times, hopping on the rear legs.

Croupade: the horse rears, then jumps vertically with the hind legs drawn up tightly to its belly.

Levade: the horse rears, drawing his forelegs in against him while the hindquarters are deeply bent and he carries the weight fully on his haunches.

THE CROUPADE AND BALLOTADE, MANEUVERS IV AND V

"Leave her to me," the brigand growled. "The rest of you kill the horse!"

Saiji backed Bastelles into the approaching mob. Then cueing the horse with her spurs, she braced herself. The massive stallion tensed momentarily and reared upright. Using his powerful haunches, he propelled them high into the air, above the swords and weapons of their foes.

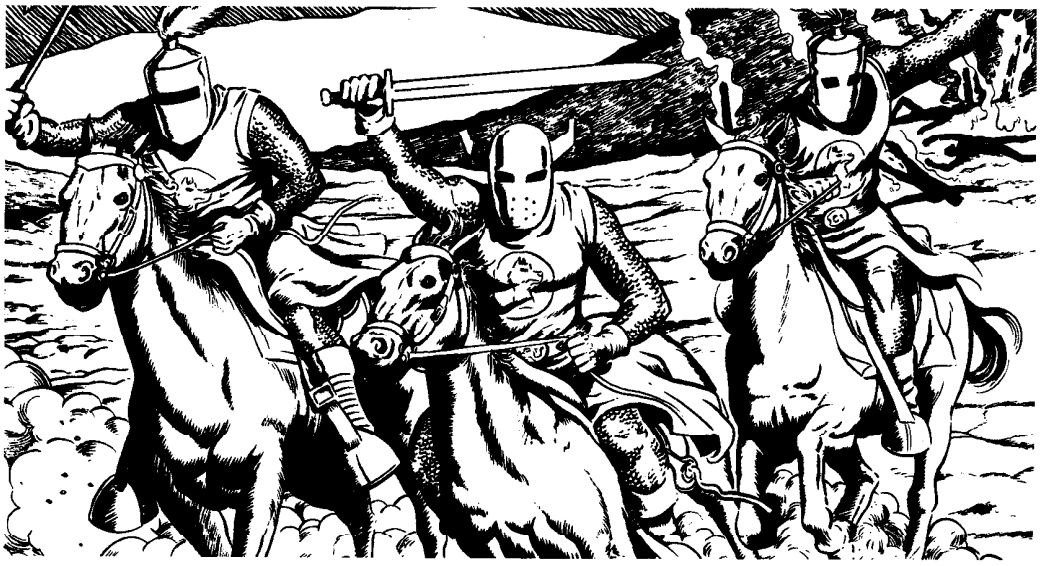
As they descended, Saiji swung her sword, bringing the point of it down into the skull of the brigand leader. The force of the landing drove the sword half-way to the hilt. Before she could free it, Bastelles lurched upwards and to the side. A clamor of swords and blades clanked against his barding, heightening the war horse's fervor. With a squeal of rage, Bastelles shook his great head, knocking the body of the brigand leader to ground where he trampled him beneath his hooves.

The effect of the display was immediate. With their leader lying on the ground beneath the war horse's feet, the brigands look to their heels and ran. "Just like common ruffians," Saiji whispered, "never finishing what they start." She spurred Bastelles forward in pursuit.

The war horse reared and then jumped forward, crashing into the rankins of their retreating foes. Those hit by the impact of the stallion's knees were knocked to the ground, senseless or unconscious. Held back by an unhurried rein, the horse cantered down the road, shepherding the remaining brigands onto the main road and into the embrace of the city wach.

IMPLICATIONS

Through the course of a lifetime, it is not feasible or realistic for any horse to learn all of these maneuvers. Despite the fictional account, Bastelles would know no more than



three. It takes an extensive amount of time and patience to teach any one of these airs above the ground. The perfecting of these maneuvers can take several years. Players are cautioned to choose carefully which two or three maneuvers suit their tastes and to document them.

The horse is a naturally occurring phenomenon that has little or nothing to do with magic. The average horse, even with the most accomplished rider on his back, will not jump a seven-foot obstacle, no matter how ferociously it is coerced to do so. Unless magically enhanced, horses cannot fly and were never meant to do so. The indoor jumping record height is just over 7'6", and the horse that can accomplish this feat is a highly skilled animal, trained daily to hurl itself and its rider over obstacles five feet and above. Such horses did not acquire this talent overnight nor in the beginning of their careers. To expect such feats in the game world is pulling more fiction than fact from the history books.

The player who decrees that his heavy war horse can hurdle any obstacle should expect to fall short. Medium and heavy war horses were not bred or intended to accomplish these tasks. Their thicker bones and heavily muscled conformations were simply not intended to hurdle high barriers. Under barding and the weight of an armored rider, the medium or heavy war horse is capable of jumping no more than four, maybe five feet and only with great effort.

APPLICATIONS

For those character classes (i.e. beast-riders, amazons, etc.) who call upon other beasts for their mounts (i.e. dolphins, unicorns, griffins), gamemasters should encourage players to use these techniques or invent new ones to enhance the realistic quality of the game. Any number of these airs above the ground can be employed and added to a roster of defensive and offensive maneuvers suited to the individual animal and its own natural defenses. For example, a unicorn's horn can be applied to the ballotade or the croupade. The low build of a charging wild boar has been known to break and mangle the legs of both man and horse. For a boar rider, this could open a whole world of training possibilities.

While maneuvers such as the capriole are less effective for animals such as wolves or large cats, the ballotade would be most effective considering the biting and clawing capabilities of these animals. Players should be invited to explore new realms and then temper their discoveries with practicality and realism.

To the player: know your animal! The possibilities are not endless, but they are numerous. And remember, it may take the course of an animal's working lifetime to learn two or even three maneuvers. Some will learn less depending upon skill, availability of resources, and the intelligence of the animal.

With effective research, your character and his or her animal partner can function at levels well beyond the norm. But players should not concentrate on creating a repertoire of airs above the ground and forget the animal who will require the breeding, character, sensitivity, and intelligence to learn these maneuvers.

And let us not forget the fruits of victory—the reward. A treat of carrots, a soothing pat on the neck, or a kind word for a job well done can mean more to an animal's sensibilities than the lash of a whip or a harsh command. This is the final maneuver that many players, in and out of game, often forget.

SAIJI AND BASTELLES, THE FINAL MANEUVER

The torchlight of the city watch grew brighter as they hurried toward the scene of the ambush. There was a distant clinking of manacles and screams as the fleeing brigands were taken into custody. Saiji sheathed her sword and sighed in relief. Their ruse had worked and without any notable injuries. The merchants would no longer have to fear for their wares on the main roads. She leaned over Bastelles' wither and rubbed his neck. "Well done boy. Good lad."

Standing guard over his mistress' prisoners, Bastelles lowered his head, soothed by her hands and kind words. He relaxed into the bit, eager for her next command. ■

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MENTORS & PATRONS

HELPFUL NPCS FOR ANY ADVENTURER'S CAREER
BY DANNY J. WALLER

Most players (and DMs as well) limit NPCs to henchmen, hirelings, followers, "plot devices," and encounters. But what do you call a nobleman that one of the PCs has become friends with? He could be of a vastly higher level than the PC, and most likely wield great political power as well. Does the PC become his follower? Of course not. This is where three new types of NPCs come in.

MENTOR

Definition: A wise and loyal advisor. A prime example of a mentor is Merlin of King Arthur fame.

A mentor has three qualities according to the definition: he (or she) is wise, loyal, and capable of giving advice. Therefore, an NPC mentor should have an above-average wisdom score (14 or better), and should be played as wise. As wisdom usually comes with age, most mentors should be older than the player characters.

A mentor is loyal, and that loyalty should be shown not only to the PC but to his ideals, principles, and other persons (PCs and NPCs) that he or she holds dear. This is a good plot device to get the PC into an adventure. The old "rescue the princess" plot could be made more interesting when the "princess" has a connection to the personal life of one of the player characters. And if the PCs fail, there will be a real difference in their future if the mentor is disappointed in the PC.

As an advisor, the mentor will have information that the PCs could use. This information might not be as accurate as from a sage, but sages are expensive (see DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide pg. 107). The mentor is not limited to mere facts and rumors, the advice that the mentor dispenses gives the DM a chance to steer the players away from false leads or areas where they could be slaughtered.

Don't overuse the guidance roll of the mentor, as the players will quickly begin to question every move and bog down the adventure. Don't limit the class of the mentor to that of the PC. An old sailor or shop-keeper could be a better mentor than a high level warrior. The PC fighter could go to the "name level" warrior for training, money, help, and so on, but will go to the shop-keeper only for advice and friendship.

SPONSOR

Definition: one who assumes responsibility as surety for, or endorser of, some person or thing.

A sponsor is the perfect roll for a teacher or somewhat higher level individual. A sponsor can be the character's first trainer and could train the PC through the first few levels. The sponsor usually arranges the PC's first job or adventure.

Other types of sponsors will get the PC into brotherhoods, clubs, guilds, special orders of knighthood, and so on. Not having a guild sponsor could cause no end of trouble for a character trying to set up shop in an area controlled by the guilds. A good example is a PC thief that tries to operate in an area controlled by the local thieves' guild. Not having a sponsor could prove fatal.

Lord Gunthor, the sponsor of Sturm Brighiblade *(Dragons of Winter Night)*, is a good example of the difference between a sponsor and a patron. A sponsor will get you in but a patron can make it possible to stay in.

PATRON

Definition: a protector; benefactor; one who sponsors and supports some person, activity, etc.

Patrons are often linked to the arts, and are most often thought of as little more than donators of money. This might be the modern version of a patron but in medieval times a patron was a force to be reckoned with. A true patron has four basic qualities: to protect, promote, sponsor, and support their chosen subject.

A patron should shield his subject from political, legal or religious prosecution or interference, or at least as much as prudent. A well-placed patron could come in handy when

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that fireball cast by a PC wizard to roast a giant slug also torches several local businesses.

A patron should promote the reputation of his subject, making possible contacts or customers available for his subject. This promotion could make finding expert hirelings, henchmen, trainers, and general information much easier.

The patron should also sponsor the subject into needed guilds or societies as well as in various other functions. Although a single patron cannot give access to all needed guilds, if he is well connected favors could be traded and doors opened.

And, finally, the patron should support his subject. This most often means a financial support but may also entail emotional, cultural, or legal support. How often does the DM give out extra treasure so that a PC could have enough gold to train? With a good patronage system this is no longer necessary, and if the patron pays for training, the PC will feel indebted to his patron. At a later time, the patron could call in the favor for "Some help with a little problem," (DM: insert plot here).

A patron in a medieval setting could patronize a single character or an entire adventuring party. A patron could be temporary; for a season, an adventure, until a new spell is created or a dragon is slain; or the patron could be a life-long sponsor. A king could sponsor several young mages in the hope that one of them has the potential to become the next court wizard.

What a patron gets out of his patronage is the status of being a patron, basking in the reflected glow of his subject's accomplishments, possible financial rewards, and increased social contacts. Some patrons show off their subjects like prize poodles or works of art ("This is my dog Pookie, my Rembrant, and my wizard.") Other patrons actually take an interest in the furthering of their subject's careers and abilities.

The examples of patrons are as various as there are professions. A lord is the patron of his knights in training, and many after training. Unless he is a paid student, an apprentice is patronized by his wizard (no pun intended).

With the use of mentors, sponsors, and patrons (MSPs), the DM has more tools to cover possible player problems.

1.) If a player can't be at the game, or leaves the game for a few sessions, the DM can present several excuses for why the character is not there. The PC's patron called on him for a mission, or his mentor is ill, or his sponsor has arranged an interview with a local high level NPC of the players class.

2.) If the player has been acting out of character or alignment, the mentor could offer the PC counseling. A sponsor or patron could mention that their actions are jeopardizing their chance for entrance of advancement in a guild.

3.) When a new player joins, an MSP (mentor, sponsor, or patron) could be used to get the new player character into the party, or at least get him or her introduced.

4.) If the players want to try something new, like form a part of characters all the same class, a single patron could be sponsoring several characters and call them together for their first adventure. An all-wizard party could be called to find some rare magical creature for the patron. An all-cleric party could have a holy pilgrimage. A party consisting of all thieves could be involved in a shadow war. Fighters of all types could get drafted. As the patron could call on the special party again, the group might be played on a semi-regular basis. This is also good for groups that have a member that can only play occasionally.

5.) If the PCs have reached a high enough level and have a full compliment of henchmen and followers, they can become MSPs to other adventurers. This would expand their list of possible "secondary" characters for later play.

7.) If one player can't make it to the game and his PC is central to the current story, the secondary party could go off on a different adventure or assist the main adventure in some way that will later affect the main PCs. This secondary mission would all be tied in logically through the mentor, sponsor, or patron.

The use of MSPs gives the DM an additional tool to start and control the flow of an adventure as well as giving the players an NPC that doesn't fall into the "Battle, Bribe, or Barter" categories the players tend to label most NPCs with. So see what is available in the home campaign, and get the characters involved in more than just dungeon delving. ■

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>>>>>[Okay chummers, it's weirdness time! More and more mages and shamans have been finding new and unusual things in astral space, so it's time we opened a new file on them here in Shadowland. This is mostly a spellcaster's file, since they're the only ones who can project in the astral plane, but the rest of you runners better listen up as well. Some of these critters, things, or whatever we choose to call them, can pop up in this simple, mundane, sprawl plane that we call home, ready to spoil the day of any slag who doesn't know how to handle them. On top of that, even though mundane runners don't travel into astral space, most of them rely on mage or shaman chummers to do so in order to scope out the team's latest target. If you do, then you should learn about all the new things that can go wrong.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant (05:37:10/05-20-55)

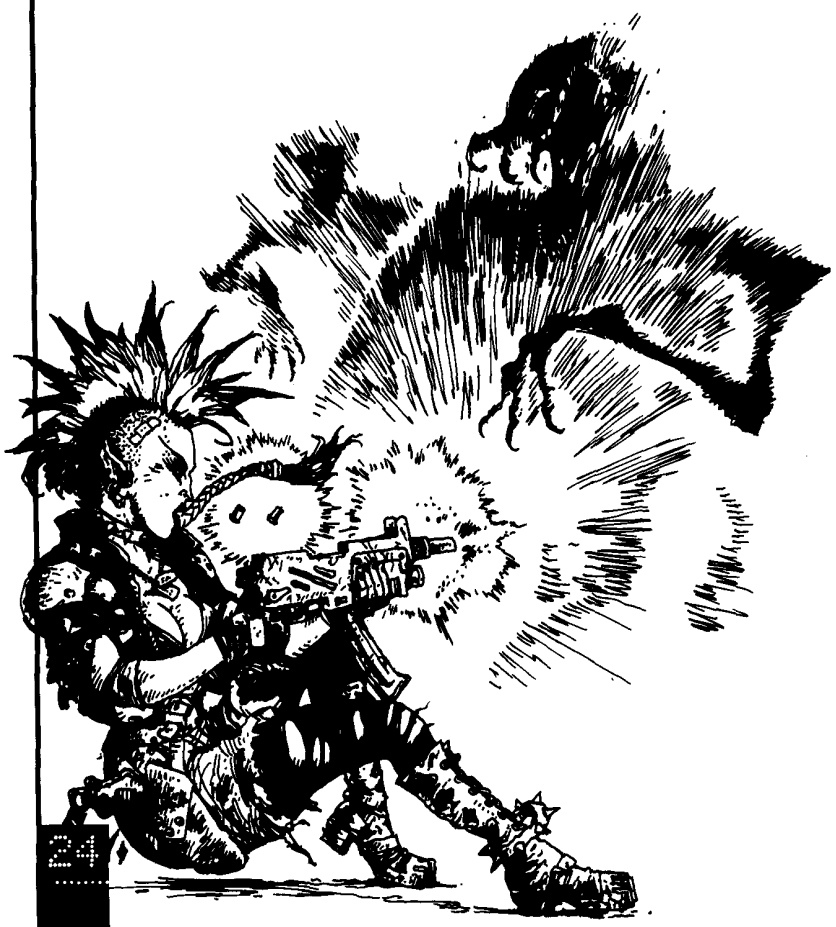
>>>>>[As if enough couldn't go wrong already.]<<<<<

—Infiltrator (11:28:11/05-20-55)

astral threats

FACING THE UNKNOWN: NEW ASTRAL THREATS FOR THE SHADOWRUN GAME

BY GREGORY DETWILER



FAB ROUNDS

>>>>>[Brace yourselves, chummers, the corps have finally done it. At least, some of them have. Reports of these things have come from mages and shamans who were astrally spying on Ares, Aztechnology, MTC, and Saeder-Krupp facilities. Yessir, fat airborne bacteria (FAB) rounds are a reality. The only saving grace is that the rounds are so fragging expensive that only the most sensitive areas are liable to have guards equipped with it. How did they do it? Basically, they give a relatively low-powered wagemage (the big boys don't need a bunch of high-tech toys) a rifle or shotgun of some sort with an ultra-sophisticated computerized range-finding and round-setting device—apparently the gun holds only one round at a time. Our magical grunt scans astral space in his area of responsibility, and when Joe Shadowmage pops up uninvited, he gets the poor schmoe in his sights, calculating the exact range to the target and fiddling with the gun's controls so that information is electronically fed into the round.

I know, I know, an astral target has no physical mass to present resistance to a bullet or slug, and a FAB-coated round would simply push him back. That's what the exact calculations are for. The round isn't covered with FAB; it's filled with it, and the fraggin' thing is set to explode when it's right in the middle of where the mage or shaman is. The FAB doesn't come out until the round is enveloped by his astral form, so when the stuff spreads out, it pushes his astral form apart in all directions. Just as well astral forms don't bleed, or there's be one fraggin' hell of a mess.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant (12:35:16/05-20-55)

>>>>>[FRAG! How can you defend against something like that?]<<<<<

—Mandy Mageboy (13:07:09/05-20-55)

>>>>>[If you see what's going down in time, dodge like fraggin' crazy to spoil the wagemage's aim. I did; that's why we know that Ares has this weapon.]<<<<<

—Malygris (16:55:33/05-20-55)

>>>>>[And you don't need a powerful mage to use it, just some no-account newbie?]<<<<<

—Mistaire (17:08:50/05-20-55)

>>>>>[That's right. It's not a fraggin' spell, after all; just good ol' high-tech weaponry of the type that corps like Ares design so well. All you need is a gunman who's just magical enough to assense astral space. That's it. I mentioned the corps who have this stuff now, but it's only a matter of time before everyone else who can afford it jumps on the bandwagon. Sorry.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant (17:32:13/05-20-55)

>>>>>[How could any mage possibly agree to do such a thing to his fellows in exchange for money?]<<<<<

—Mistaire (17:47:32/05-20-55)

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>>>>>[You chummers noticed the cost of fetishes, foci, and all other magical trinkets lately? Those jokers who claim that magic evens the odds between the rich and the poor don't know drek. The slag with a pile of fetishes, foci, spell locks, and whatnot is going to win every time, and the only way to get a lot of them in a hurry without draining yourself to death from personally enchanting them is to buy them, and that takes money. The corps have the money, and they'll even equip you for free if you work for them. I'm going places, and I'm not letting any fraggin' "we spellcasters are all brothers under the skin" drek get in my way. When I...BREAK]<<<<<

—The Corporation's Apprentice [18:00:00/05-20-55]

>>>>>[There, drekhead, now your corp'll have to buy you a new deck as well.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant [18:00:28/05-20-55]

>>>>>[Getting back to the subject at hand, dodging FAB rounds might not be all that easy. Remember that you can't see through inanimate objects like walls and ceilings from astral space; you have to go through them to see what's on the other side. If our wagemage with the supergun is hidden behind them, he can get the drop on you the moment you pop up, and not even the luck of Coyote will be able to save you.]<<<<<

—Holy Howler [18:42:07/05-20-55]

>>>>>[It gets worse. So far, everyone's been assuming that our mage gunman (who brings new meaning to the term "astral sniper") is the only thing to worry about when you encounter him. But in a sensitive installation, he'll be only one part of a multifaceted defense system. Our boy with the FAB gun may not be worth drek magically, but if the target is important enough, you can bet his big brothers will be drifting around on the astral lookout; either that, or they'll have whistled up some elementals or spirits to do that job. When you're busy duking it out with an astral opponent just as tough and just as fast as you are, you might not think to look around you for that kid with the glorified scattergun. And places like the Aztechnology Pyramid have one fraggin' lot of accompanying spirits to watch out for.]<<<<<

—Malygris [18:56:28/05-20-55]

>>>>>[You've got one chance if you're caught between an astrally-patrolling mage and an apprentice with a FAB gun. Your worthy opponent will have his own distinct form in astral space so his associate can tell the difference between him and any intruders. The moment you see the guy, shape your aura to take his form, including insubstantial copies of any magical gear he's carrying. They won't be worth drek against him, of course, but they'll sure frag with the mind of our "astral sniper", especially once the two of you have been maneuvering awhile; he won't know who to shoot.]<<<<<

—Wu Jen [19:07:47/05-20-55]

ASTRAL BEINGS

>>>>>[I'm throwing the board open to everyone who has a war story to tell, starting with some of the chummers who convinced me to open this file to begin with. Sound off now, and try to be accurate so you don't get anybody killed.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant [19:21:11/05-20-55]

>>>>>[I met the siren of astral space and lived to tell of it. Three "colleagues" of mine were with me at the time; never mind what we were doing there. As we were [literally] flying along, we heard what can only be described as music, but yet not music as the rest of you know it. It was, well, ethereal: the music of the spheres that ancient philosophers wrote about. The four of us were literally convulsed with joy upon hearing it, and instantly changed direction and headed for the source. I say "hear", but it was more like we were feeling it, with the sound seeming to run up and down the entire length of our bodies.

I don't know how long we flew before we encountered the singer. She was reclining on what looked like a typical black thundercloud, but with no rain or lightning coming out of it. As near as I can recall, she was human-sized, shaped like a beautiful long-haired woman, but made out of some kind of silvery mist or silver-hued energy field. We settled down on the cloud-island or whatever it was and relaxed completely, enjoying her song for what must have been hours.

After a while, I got to wondering how long we had been there, and how much time we had left before we had to get back to our meat bodies. I tried to mention this to my comrades, but they were so caught up in her song that they didn't even hear me. I tried dragging them away, but that didn't work, and in the end I had to abandon them to their doom. Oddly, I didn't even think about attacking the siren to free them; probably some leftover effect of her magic. I was down to my last bit of essence when I returned to my body. My friends were already cold and dead.

How do you avoid the effects of the song? I wish I knew. You can't take earplugs along on an astral jaunt, of course, and since there are no vehicles used in astral travel—not yet, at least—you sure as frag can't tie yourself to the mast. The only two things I can think of are either constantly using noise-making spells such as thunderclap or else crafting some fetishes or foci in the shape of earplugs before enchanting them; enchanted gear's the only physical stuff you can take with you "out there." It's taken me forever to learn the first and do the latter, but I've done both now, and as soon as I finish this file I'm going out there again to avenge my friends or die trying.]<<<<<

—Phoebus [19:29:53/05-20-55]

>>>>>[Phoebus told me beforehand about his second jaunt and the absolute maximum of time he can live in astral space, so I got a couple chummers of mine to stay with him and keep an eye on his meat bod. Stay tuned.]<<<<<

—Sysop Servant [19:41:16/05-20-55]

>>>>>[This fraggin' file's going to look like the Odyssey by the time we're done. First the Sirens, now Scylla or something like her. I was astrally snooping on the private residence of one of my brother's enemies as a favor to him. The slag didn't have any astral guards or other defenses, so I figured it'd be a walkover. Wrong! There was nothing in place as a regular defense, but the point in astral space next to where the slag's home was had a pretty nasty resident: a dark brown mass the size of a house, with two orange eyes and a dozen jointed arms ending in crab-like pincers. I tried dodging it, then zigged when I should have zagged and got caught by a claw. I activated a couple mana bolt fetishes and burned them up breaking free; planned walkover or

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not, you don't catch me jandering into astral space without my heaviest guns.

That's not the worst part of it, either. I said to hell with the favor and ducked back into my meat bod, and I'd barely started rising to my feet when one of those arms reached into my bedroom out of nowhere. It grabbed me and started to drag me back into astral space. I burned up every fetish and focus I had to make it let go, then fraggin' near drained myself to death casting regular spells, and I still don't know whether I geeked it or merely drove it off. In the end I spied on my brother's enemy by turning invisible and sneaking in physically; no way am I gonna astrally project there again.)<<<<<

—Marduk (19:53:43/05-20-55)

>>>>>(Marduk raises a valid point. There are all kinds of things in all parts of astral space, and sometimes they just happen to be right where you most want to go. So just because your intended target can't create or afford magical protection doesn't mean there's no chance of running into trouble when you assense the place from the astral plane.)<<<<<

—Pelias (20:45:03/05-20-55)

>>>>>(And that's chip-truth. We lost our shaman when he was assensing a Shiawase facility that Mr. Johnson told us contained some drek-hot biotech weapon prototypes. The rest of us were hiding in a building across the street, standing guard over his meat bod, when all of a sudden Archie notices that our chummer's gone cold. Scratch one shadowrun, at least until we can hire another shaman or mage. We didn't know then that our troubles were only beginning.

Just as we were getting ready to pull out, this thing pops out of thin air and plops down among us, standing right over Hezekiah's body. All I saw at first was only the body and legs, which were those of a horse-sized giant ant, and the first thing I thought was that we had a fraggin' insect spirit on our hands. Then I heard Archie's scream get cut off by a loud crunch, and looked forward. Where the ant's head should be was the head and forepaws of a fraggin' lion, like the thing was some sort of ant/lion centaur. Slotter raised his Sandler TMP and sprayed a clip of bullets right in its face, but they didn't do drek. Then he brought the gun down hard on its head as it was spittin' out Archie; still nothing. The thing was even immune to melee attacks with mundane weapons. Then it grabbed him.

Fortunately, Hezekiah had left Danny and me a mageblade apiece for services rendered. We were also fraggin' lucky to be indoors instead of the wide open spaces; that thing was so big, and the room so small, that it couldn't turn to attack the chummers on either side of it. So while Slotter was dying, we hacked away at it, Danny on the left and me on the right, and finally killed it. The critter just vanished into thin air, the same way it appeared in the first place. By that time, the run was blown; all the fireworks had put the facility on full alert, and we got out of the fraggin' neighborhood one step ahead of a Lone Star SWAT team. Don't know what they thought when they saw what was left of our chummers. I don't even know if that thing was a summoned spirit of some sort, or if it just happened to be roaming the neighborhood when Hezekiah showed up astrally.)<<<<<

—Trollkin (20:50:37/05-20-55)

>>>>>(My guess is another accidental encounter. If it had been a guardian spirit of some sort, the Shiawase guards would have hit you themselves without bothering with Lone Star.)<<<<<

—Holy Howler (20:51:55/05-20-55)

>>>>>(I hate to interrupt, but Phoebus' time limit just ran out. What the frag happened?)<<<<<

—Sysop Servant (21:52:01/05-20-55)

>>>>>(Sorry, SS, Shaggy says he didn't make it.)<<<<<

—Decker in a Blue Dress (21:53:37/05-20-55)

>>>>>(Drek! Well, all you astrally-active chummers out there, now you know. Watch out.)<<<<<

—Sysop Servant (21:54:52/05-20-55)

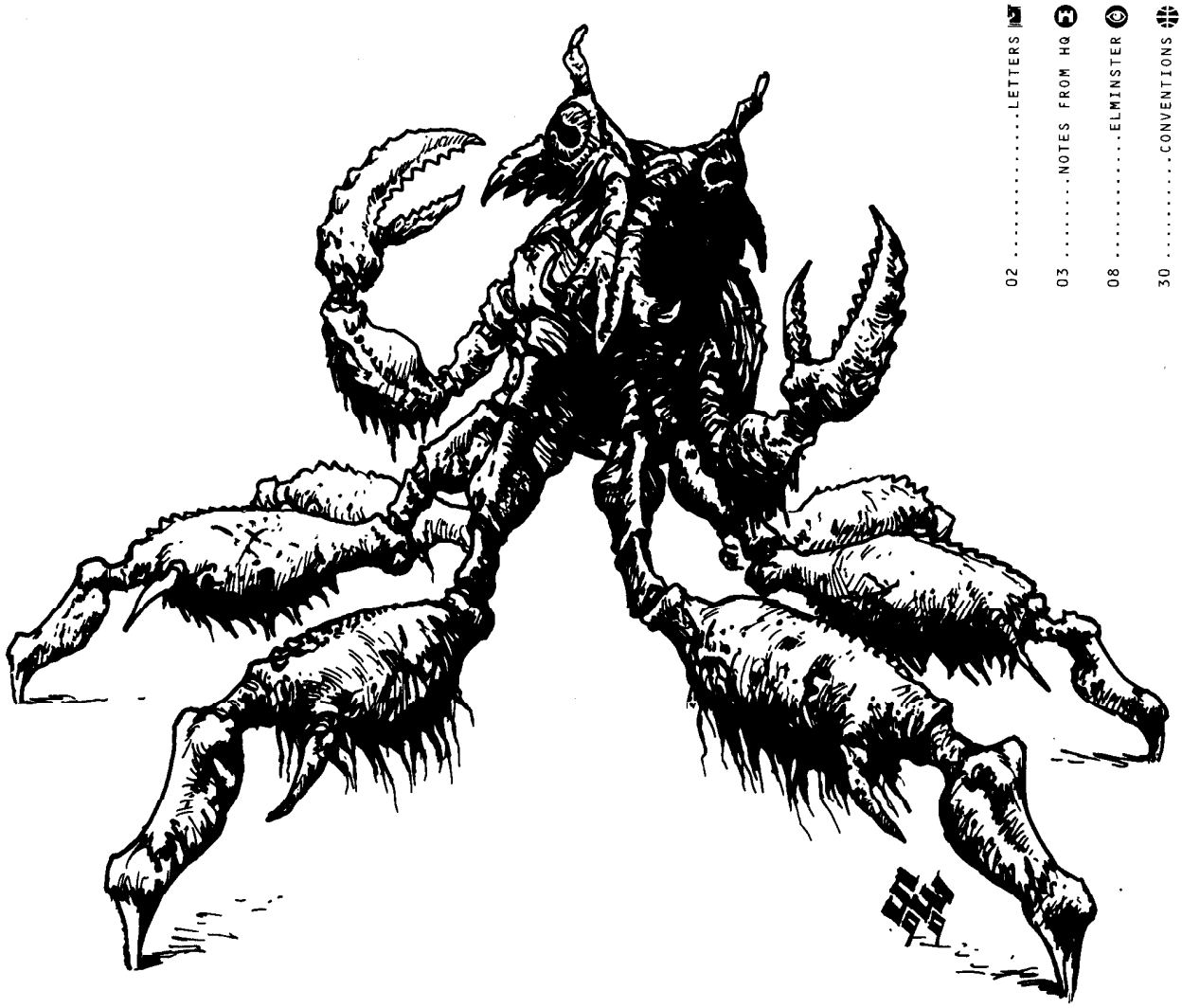
CRITTERS

Critter	B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
Allurer	3	3X4	-	12	1	7	7A	5	Special
Krabben	12/8	35	40	-	2/5	2	(6)A	7	12D+2Reach
Ant Lion	10	4X5	8	-	3/4	2	(8)A	6	10S+1Reach

ALLURER

Powers: Compulsion (Song), Immunity (Age, Normal Weapons, Pathogens), Influence (only not to attack the allurer)

The allurer looks like a cloud of silvery mist or a silver energy field shaped somewhat like a human woman. It has no physical attacks, and no defenses other than its powers. Its sole attack is to compel astral travelers to its cloud island with its



singing and keep them there until their essence runs out and they die. When the character first hears the song, he may resist it with a successful Willpower roll, and if he fails, this roll may be repeated once every hour until death. Ditto for the Influence attack.

KRABBEN

Powers: Hardened Armor, Immunity (Age, Normal Weapons, Poisons), Manifestation

In contrast to the lovely allurer, the krabben is a hideous hybrid of crab and octopus. Dark brown in color, it has a hard armor shell and armored, jointed arms in the place of tentacles, each of which ends in a crab-like pincer. This elephant-sized astral predator has only one method of propulsion: a form of flight (hence the lone number for Quickness). Unlike the allurer, it can and does manifest itself into the physical world, typically when pursuing an astral traveler who cuts and runs for his meat body.

ANT LION

Powers: Enhanced Physical Attributes (Quickness, Strength), Enhanced Senses, Hardened Armor, Immunity (Normal Weapons, Poisons), Manifestation

Although smaller, the ant lion possesses some of the qualities of the krabben, having an armored body (ant portions only) and the ability to manifest itself in the physical world, again when pursuing prey. In addition, its lion brain gives it more curiosity than the krabben, so that even when it kills the mage or shaman in astral space, it uses its enhanced senses to trace a path back to his meat body, attacking anyone guarding it or simply rampaging about in the physical world. Its horse-sized body is that of an ant, with six ant legs as well, but in place of the ant's head are the head and clawed forepaws of a lion. The front part has typical tawny lion coloration, while the ant portions are a shiny black. ■

FAB GUN

The FAB gun has the following stats:

GUN	CONCEAL	AMMO	MODE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	AVAIL	COST	STREET
FAB	2	1	SS	12S	4.5	NA	7,000¥	NA

A FAB gun is a single-shot weapon that looks like an old single-barreled shotgun with a computer range-finder on top of it. The weapon breaks open just ahead of the stock and trigger for reloading, and the FAB round (which costs 500¥) must be aligned perfectly in the chamber, so as to make connections with the computerized feed through which programming information must flow. Because of this, it takes an average of twenty seconds to load and fire the weapon. The computer determines the exact distance to the target, automatically feeding its information into the round and setting it to go off when the target's astral form is all around it. When the round explodes, the expanding FAB cloud tears the astral form apart in all directions. Only a character who can assense the astral plane can use this weapon as it was meant to be used.

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recipe for mutiny

A SHORT AD&D® GAME ADVENTURE
BY LLOYD BROWN III

This short AD&D® adventure puts the PCs on a ship with a charismatic disloyal officer, a competent but crude and harsh captain, and a series of incidents that test the crew's loyalty. The first mate tries to stir up a mutiny. His success or failure depends on the actions of the PCs.

Although any mix of races and classes may participate in the adventure, shipboard skills might be useful. Character should be mostly 1st level, with little spellcasting ability. Magic can easily alter the course of the adventure, even something as simple as a charm person spell.

The adventure takes place entirely on a ship while underway (the *Dancing Mare* if the DM's ship is yet unnamed). The DM can use this adventure to liven up an otherwise uneventful time during another adventure, or he can fabricate a reason for using the ship, making this adventure the center of attention. Possible reasons for a lengthy journey could be a summons from a character's mentor, a request by a religious figure, or a command from the area's ruler.

PLAYERS INTRODUCTION

The 'Mare's departure is so smooth it seems like the dock, not your vessel, is slipping away. The hands expertly maneuver the sails to take full advantage of the stiff breeze and a sudden gust sends the ship leaping out to sea. Even a critical scan of the deck shows organization and tidy seamanship. The crew seems to share a confidence in each other and close camaraderie. The journey should be quick and uneventful.

DM'S BACKGROUND

Coello went to sea to become a pirate, but hasn't gotten his own ship yet after two years and he has grown impatient. He has been trying to earn the crew's loyalty and undermine the captain's authority. He has also stolen Captain Hood's letters of marque, which allow him to attack merchant vessels of certain nations legally as a privateer. Since the captain only rarely needs to produce the letters, their theft has gone unnoticed.

During and between the events, Coello tries subtly to convince the PCs that the captain is a pirate and is dangerous to the crew. If the PCs make it plain that they will attempt to squash any uprising, he attempts to keep them busy or get them off of the boat on some pretense ("Hey, I think this is where that chest of gold sank last summer").

The DM should familiarize himself with the characters presented in the Dramatis Personae and use the Events to bring out the personalities and loyalties of the characters. The NPCs' traits also come into play as the characters question them, pursue their own activities, or help out around the ship.

EVENTS

Shoal. A grinding sound rises from the ship's keel as the ship runs over an uncharted obstacle. Captain Hood orders the anchor lowered and has divers investigate the hull. The ship suffers some minor damage (1 hull point). When the divers report, the captain nods and orders the ship to continue.

The first mate tells the crew the damage is worse than it really is, that the hull might crack under too much strain—such as a storm. If any of the PCs is an experienced sailor and takes a look at the damage himself, he can see that the first mate is exaggerating or overestimating the damage to the hull.

Storm. Although it's not a bad storm, this event causes great anxiety among those who listened to the mate's opinion of the damage caused by the shoal. This event should demonstrate the captain's skill and sense of calm in times of crisis.

The lookout alerts the captain to the clouds and notes that they are heading toward the ship, probably to arrive in 12 hours. The captain concurs, thanks him, and sends him back to his post. He orders a slight change in direction to give his crew a little more time to prepare before the storm hits.

The next day dawn comes late. Clouds cover the sky, and rain is clearly visible to one side, coming toward the ship. The storm gradually rises in intensity, until the waves approach 10' in height. The wind and waves keep the crew busy, but they don't threaten the safety of the ship. Afterward, however, the first mate talks about how close the ship came to breaking up and says the captain needlessly endangered his valuable crew.

Ghost ship. The lookout spots a ship with black sails on the horizon. It approaches slowly, no matter how the ship maneuvers to avoid it. As it nears, the PCs and crew see nobody on board. It moves right by the ship, unseen forces moving the wheel. The ship never makes a sound. The ghost ship appears to take damage if the PCs somehow attack it, but it does not sink.

The event stirs discontent. All of the crew take it as a bad omen, but their individual interpretations are all different. Most voice their opinions if the PCs ask.

Fog. At dusk, heavy fog closes in on the ship. The captain orders most of the sails furled. As the ship makes minimal speed, Coello questions the durability of the ship's rations, potential losses to profits from late delivery, or the possibility of encountering another ghost ship. He whispers that his magic indicates the fog is lighter a short ways to one side, and he told the captain, but the captain wouldn't change course.

If a PC asks about the magic spell he used, the bard waves him off, saying "It's one of my own. You don't know it." He has no such spell.

The ship clears the fog without incident at dawn.

Doldrums. A lack of wind leaves the ship sitting almost still. The monotony as the ship plods along with the current makes everyone cranky. The bard attempts to pass time with music, but nobody is interested. The captain orders crew members to repair the damage caused by the shoal. The repair keeps the crew busy only for a few hours.

After two full days, the captain rotates the crew among the ship's boat, pulling the ship along at a snail's pace with manpower. The strain is nearly unbearable, but the captain refuses to allow a rest. "A busy crew is a happy crew" is his motto. After another day, a strong breeze fills the sails, and the ship can resume its course only slightly behind schedule.

Ship. The lookout spots a ship on the horizon. Captain Hood orders his first mate to break out the cutlasses and prepare to attack. Coello hands weapons only to those he deems loyal and calls the captain on his claim of letters of marque, making his bid for a mutiny. The results are largely up to the intervention of the PCs.

The ship makes its escape during the confusion, in all likelihood. The ship is a heavily-armed dromund that could turn away any attack that wasn't backed by powerful magic.

CONCLUSION

Whoever is successful in the final conflict thanks the PCs for their help (if they did help), refunds any payment the PCs made for the voyage and offers them a small cash reward as well (25-50 gp each). If the PCs aided the losing side, they are put ashore at the nearest location—friendly or not. If the PCs manage to prevent hostilities entirely and still resolve the points of conflict, any good-aligned PCs should earn a bonus of 200-500 xp.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Captain Bart Hood, hm 4th level Fighter: AL LN; AC 9, MV 12; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; SA one-hander style specialization; SD nil; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 13; XP 125.

Equipment: fine quality cutlass (non-magical +1 to attacks), two hand axes at his belt, pouch with 90 gp, 110 sp.

In combat, Captain Hood throws a hand axe or two before closing if he has time. He's always alert and not likely to fall for tricks unless they're very subtle. Captain Hood is an experienced leader and a very good sailor, although he's insensitive and very harsh on the crew. He's nominally a merchant, but he's not above a little "privateering" (he always winks when he says it). The good captain does have letters of marque, but he refuses to show them to anybody on board. The captain is also the ship's navigator and is actually quite good for someone with average intelligence.

Coello, hm 4th level Bard: AL NE; AC 8, MV 12; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (longsword +1), Str 9, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 17; XP 175

Equipment: *bracers of defense AC 8, longsword +1.*

Spells: *magic missile, spook, bind.* Other spells in book: *affect normal fires, dancing lights, identify, read magic, wizard mark; deafness, forget, shatter.*

After two years at sea, Coello is impatient for a ship of his own. He has suborned much of the crew with his overwhelming personality and convinced most of them that the captain's piracy will get them all hanged. He knows the letters of marque are real, but he has stolen them and hidden them among his own possessions. He plans to make much more frequent use of them once he has his own ship. He is creative and sometimes impulsive.

Unless otherwise noted, the crew members are 0-level, AC 10, WP cutlass, dagger or knife, NWP in seamanship, gaming). Most carry no weapon, but they can all find a club or knife pretty easily.

Riese (AC 9, 6 hp). In addition to his cutlass, he uses a dagger in his left hand. He has the two-hander style specialization and Dex 15 for no penalty with his cutlass, -1 THAC0 penalty with the dagger. Riese is aloof and realistic. Physically, he is short and thin, but very energetic. He has a gentle, sure touch at the helm. Riese is unshakably loyal to captain.

Kempis Span, cook (hp 4), carries a large club. The cook is surly, with a gallows humor. He's not above using poison if necessary. He favors the bard and his way of doing things.

Masset, sailor (hp 8). Masset is dimwitted, gloomy, and gets seasick during rough weather. He is large and overweight, with blue-gray eyes, dark curly hair. Masset was uncommitted, but the bard recently offered to make him a mate and swayed him.

Allan of Gaunt, sailor (hp 6): Laconic and slow-talking, Allan has chestnut brown hair and beard, and an emaciated appearance. He was badly wounded in the last monster attack; Allan blames the captain for the incident. He gladly and openly favors Coello.

Edmund Smensk, sailor (hp 3): Edmund is a young sailor and the captain's nephew. He's restless and naive. He stands with the captain through anything.

Juden, sailor (hp 5): Juden is cowardly, but compulsively friendly. He doesn't care who's in charge, as long as he doesn't get killed. Coello's high charisma can easily sway him to show at least nominal support, although Juden's cowardice keeps him from contributing much.

Gelunt, sailor (hp 4): Cynical and narrow-minded, Gelunt thinks the captain is the better man, but he plans to desert anyway. He'll side with the bard, thinking that he'll get a chance to leave sooner.

Allan the Quiet (1st level fighter, hp 8): Allan is specialized in the knife. Allan is pleasant but a little selfish. At 50, he's the oldest crew member. He knows how easily a wizard can destroy a ship and argued bitterly against taking the bard on board since the beginning. He fears and hates magic; he'll side with the captain, although he rather dislikes both men.

Alcala (half-elf 2nd level thief, hp 10, Dex 16, leather armor—AC 6). Alcala is an avid people-watcher and knows all of the crew well. His natural curiosity and distrust, along with his good eyes and ears make him a natural lookout. He believes that the captain is too harsh, but that he doesn't deserve to be killed. He won't agree with any plan to kill the captain.

Maxir, sailor: Maxir is barbaric, and suspicious of everything and everyone. He is committed to the bard and certainly willing to kill. He knows where the bard keeps his spellbook and uses this information if Coello tries any heavy-handed tactics with him. ■

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Check the RPGA convention calendar on the world wide web at http://www.rpga.com for even more conventions running RPGA events. You can find events under almost every rock and behind almost every tree if you look, especially if a monkey helps you.

GLATHRICON XIII GAMEFEST
August 20-22, 1999
University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN
Contact: EGG, P.O. Box 15414, Evansville, IN 47716, 812-853-7850. email: Glathricon@aol.com
Glathricon features RPGA events including LIVING CITY and LIVING JUNGLE, and also Star Wars, Vampire, Earthdawn, and some great AD&D. Plus, find miniature battle games, MAGIC: THE GATHERING and Highlander ICG tournaments, a Morrow Project tournament, and more. Or bring your own games. During those off-gaming times you can shop in the dealer's room or look at the art show. There is always a lot to do at this weekend convention.

The convention is $20 for the weekend, and a deal at that price.

COGCON 7
September 26-28, 1999
University Center-East, Rolla, MO
Contact: COGCON, 573-341-5932 email: cogcon@rollanet.org, **web:** http://www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Lots of roleplaying can be found at COGCON, Rolla's annual convention. RPGA-sanctioned games galore, including a premier LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS roleplaying game adventure (the Network's first!), Call of Cthulhu, AD&D, LIVING campaigns, plus GURPS (not RPGA-sanctioned, but still fun). Miniature events include Star Fleet Battles and Battletech. Computer gaming, a DCI-sanctioned MAGIC: THE GATHERING tournament, and more (there's always more).

The convention is $13 at the door and $10 in pre-reg, though as of this printing you might not be able to get the pre-reg rate (but it never hurts to ask). There are special rates for one-day and TCG-only players.

MACE
November 5-7, 1999
Ramada Inn & Conference Center, High Point, NC
Contact: JustUs Productions, PO Box 38001, Greensboro, NC 27438-8001, 336-282-5562 , email: justusprod@aol.com, web: http://www.justusproductions.com (under construction)
North Carolina's premier gaming event only rivaled by that con in Wisconsin. Three full days of gaming excitement at the Ramada Inn & Conference Center (formerly the Holiday Inn Market Square) in downtown High Point, NC. MACE is chock full of games, games, and more games. If you can't find it, it's because we don't have it. You will find RPGA events, live action gaming, board games, card games, roleplaying games, A complete line of stuff to buy in the newly revised dealers room, wonderful causes to donate your money to with our charity auction, and let us not forget those GGGREATTT! guests from last year - baby lions and tigers!

With a pre-reg price of only $17 and the at-the-door price of $25, you must be asking yourself how can they bring this much excitement to me the humble little gamer for such a low, low price. MIRRORS! And what a bargain for a night stay at the new Ramada Inn at only $68 plus tax. Need we say more! Remember it's not the size that counts but what you do while you're there...MACE '99

CLASSIFIEDS

New England: Would like to hear from GREYHAWK, FORGOTTEN REALMS, and LIVING CITY players and DMs in the New England area. Would like to trade original gaming info with you (new spells, magic items, house rules, etc.). Also would like to hear from anybody who still plays the old STAR FRONTIERS and GAMMA WORLD games. Contact Kenneth McDonald, P.O. Box 63, North Monmouth, ME 04265.

Wisconsin: Dear STRPS! Aficionados (and you know who you are!). *I have finally completed the STRPS! Encounter Guide,* long promised, long anticipated, long delayed! Over 300 encounters for medieval/fantasy games using the Simple, Transgenre Roleplaying System. Includes disease tables, encounter tables, weather, and so much more!! Write me, David Sloan, at 320 S. East Ave., Waukesha, WI 53186 for *price information and order forms! Whew!! It's done, it's* done, it's done at last.

Michigan RPG player looking for other gamers to start bi-weekly gaming group for the following systems: Palladium, Battletech, Star Trek, Shadowrun, AD&D, Basic D&D, and *many others. For info write to: Gamers,* P.O. Box 881, Howell, MI 48843

conventions

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For Sale: Twilight 2000 book set 2nd edition. Infantry Weapons of the World, Soviet Combat Vehicle Handbook, Merc 2000, NATO Combat Vehicle Handbook. All in excellent condition. Also Soviet Vehicle Guide and Small Arms Guide from 1st edition. Asking $85 for all. Interested? Write to: Gamers, P.O. Box 881, Howell, MI 48843

Gamers: I'm looking for *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set (TSR 1082), *D&D Immortals Rules set* (TSR 1017), *Spellammer* boxed set (TSR 1049), and DRAGON *Magazine* #134. Send your asking price to Leo Stage, 610 Frontage Rd., Garden City, KS 67846 *or call 316-276-0714.*

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LIVING CITY™ CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As the campaign staff has been updating and reviewing things for the re-rollout which should be complete any day now, we have decided that a standard statement on activities in the campaign is needed, so it is presented below.

Players in the LIVING CITY campaign participate in two types of activities when building their characters, which we will term adventuring and non-adventuring activities.

Adventuring is when players play their characters in RPGA-sanctioned adventures wherever they may be held, whether at conventions, game days, retail stores, club meetings, or more. Adventures (formerly called tournaments) are the meat of the campaign activity, and all RPGA members can play characters in adventures. Adventuring also includes special missions, which are non-standard adventures run for one group of players, generally relating to something in the life of one character that must be resolved. Special mission guidelines and application can be found on the website. Adventuring includes high-level campaign expansions, designed to challenge characters whose levels of power and ability have exceeded the challenge level of the regular campaign. Only paying RPGA members can participate in high-level campaign expansions or special missions.

Non-adventuring time in the campaign can be used for a wide variety of character-building options. Only paying RPGA members are eligible to participate in any non-adventuring activity.

LARPs, or interactives, are the main center of non-adventuring activity. These take place mostly at conventions, but online chats in-character in the RPGA chat room qualify as LARP-like activities. At a LARP, characters can interact, pursue short plots, participate in mini-adventures, compete in city-wide competitions, visit booths and join organizations as permitted by the rules of those organizations, contribute to charity, buy land, and occasionally trade magical items. Other activities may be possible.

Player characters in the campaign can join organizations and build businesses. These opportunities have their own documentation explaining the options and requirements. See the chart for what is currently available by class. We are working on options for fighters and thieves even as you read this, which you should see by the end of the year.

ALL CLASSES
- Knighthoods
- Bard's Guild
- City Watch
- Silent Network
- Establish business

PRIESTS
- LC Priestly Registry

WIZARDS
- Wizard's Guild

Characters may also aspire to and achieve positions of importance or power in guilds, in the government, in religious organizations. Further, unique options for character development at very high level may be available to certain characters whose players have maintained the spirit of the campaign rules, encouraged others to have fun and get involved, and have exhibited ethical behavior throughout their playing career. Good development of the character throughout the character's history is a secondary consideration in awarding the rights to special character development options. These activities have (or will have) their own statements of option and requirement, and steps to apply.

Time in the campaign will be tracked during the calendar year using an easy system of time units. The reason for this is that many non-adventuring activities require time out of the character's life to accomplish goals or perform duties associated with membership in an organization or ownership of a business or in occupation of a position. The time tracking system is an easy way to merge all such requirements, and track things like time out of game for results of adventures too.

Players should track time for their characters if the characters participate in any non-adventuring activity (except LARPs) or if the characters participate in high-level campaign expansions or special missions. If the character is only played in adventures in the regular campaign, then you need not worry about tracking time at all. And, because of the way that the system is built, if you decide to get involved in activities which require time tracking later on, you will easily be able to step right in.

The basis of the time tracking system is the time unit, which is equivalent to 1/2 a tenday in the Forgotten Realms. There are 73 time units in calendar year, and time units for the Forgotten Realms calendar year will be tracked in the calendar year of the real world, for simplicity. So, every character has 73 units of time as of January 1st, 2000, and with them he or she can do a great variety of things.

The use of time units for any activity will be tracked in the character log sheet. The exact order of use of time units is not important, so that we need not worry about characters being out of play in the middle of the convention season for some reason or other. When a time unit is used, simply log it and the reason, and have the person supervising that activity sign the log sheet.

Note: if your character is adventuring in the regular campaign only, you can ignore this system. You need not limit yourself to 73 adventures for the calendar year. This system comes into play when you want to involve your character in non-adventuring activities, high-level campaign expansions, or special missions.

Adventuring in the regular campaign costs one unit per adventure. This is tracked on the character log sheets, so the adventuring units are tracked automatically and can be easily counted at any time. Thus, if you are not tracking time for a character and suddenly need to, you can count how many adventures that character has participated in since the beginning of the year and know how many units you have left.

Each of the organizations has a time cost associated with membership. This cost should be paid at the beginning of the year if your character is in that organization. See the documents on the individual organizations for the costs for specific activities. A chart may be developed so that it is easy to find out how much something costs. Within an organization there might be different costs for different activities, such as spell research or rank in City Watch. Pay the appropriate costs when your character engages in that activity.

When your character runs out of units, you should stop playing the character until the next calendar year. Should you be found to be using extra units, the benefits of the extra units will be retroactively removed from your character upon discovery.

You do not have to use up all your units. You probably will want to, but you don't have to. Remember that you have to do all non-adventuring activities through interactive booths, and plan your character's time accordingly. Units do not carry over into next year (since they represent time, rather than something material like gold). In using your units, you may have to choose between one activity and another in the campaign, which is exactly what the system is designed to do. A single character simply cannot do everything there is to do, so choose what you want and focus on those things. You can start other characters to do other things.

As of August 1st, 1999, all characters have 36 units for the rest of this year. You need not worry about stuff that has gone on before, or adventures from before. Start now with 36 units, and go forward. ■

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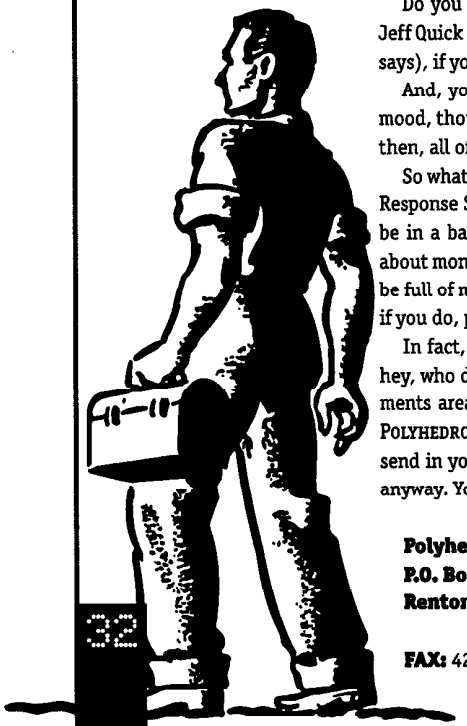
WE'RE HERE TO HEAR

Please rank each article or section of the magazine from 1-5 with 1 being "What the !#?@!." and 5 being "Holy Crap! Make me a copy of that!" Please include any other comments you feel are appropriate. All responses received on or before September 1, 1999 will be entered for a drawing to win a free copy of the *Against the Giants: The Liberation of Geoff*. Woo-hoo!

RPGA # _____ Name _____

	RATING				
ARTICLE	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Letters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Notes From HQ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Table Talk	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Member Spotlight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet 101	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Elminster's Everwinking Eye	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
City Stories: Temple of Mystra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tech Toys for Tots of All Ages	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Of Sigil and the Sea	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dexerity for Warhorses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mentors, Patrons and Sponsors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Astral Threats for **Shadowrun**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recipe for Mutinty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classifieds	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Do you like monkeys? I know I do. As my good friend Jeff Quick once said (and man, you can believe *whatever* he says), if you're in a bad mood, just think about a monkey.

And, you know what? It works. Whenever I'm in a bad mood, thoughts of monkeys just come out of nowhere, and then, all of a sudden, I'm no longer in a bad mood.

So what does that have to do with this month's Reader's Response Survey? Well, if you don't fill out the survey, I'll be in a bad mood. If I'm in a bad mood, I'll be thinking about monkeys, and then the design for the next issue will be full of monkeys. You don't want that do you? Well, even if you do, please send in your Reader Response survery.

In fact, just for the rest of you that love monkeys (and hey, who doesn't), I've put a handy check box in the comments area to the right. Check "I want more monkeys in POLYHEDRON!" and we'll put in more monkeys. If you don't send in your survey, it will count as a more monkeys vote anyway. You can always fax us with your survey as well.

Polyhedron Reader Response #137
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707 USA

FAX: 425-226-3182

COMMENTS

☐ **Yes! I want more monkeys in POLYHEDRON Magazine!**
☐ **No! I hate monkeys! Keep them out of Poly! Except for Nicky, the golden lion tamarin. He's cute.**